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RAZZORCAKE

#111

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ONE PUNK'S GUIDE
TO THE DARK AGES





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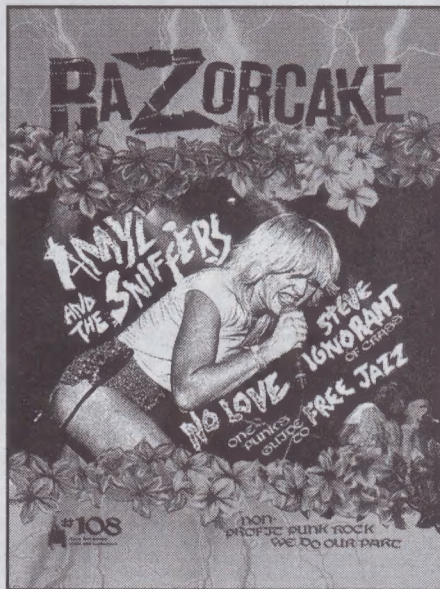
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ARE

RAZORCAKE is a magazine dedicated to DIY punk, independent culture, and amplifying unheard voices. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, we're sustained by subscriptions, donations, advertisements, and grants. All support is greatly appreciated. We feel when we work together, life is a little more bearable. On one side is a terrifying culture of manipulation, and on the other side are all of us.

Anyone has the potential to be a Razorcake contributor. If you don't see or hear what you'd like covered, lend us a helping hand. If you're knowledgeable about DIY punk, are open to the editing of your work, can meet deadlines, and follow instructions, we'll consider your contribution. All creative content is done on a volunteer basis. Razorcake does not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist bullshit—and we've held these ethics since our start in 2001. Diversity makes us a better punk organization. We're encouraging people who are marginalized—by gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and personal experience—to submit material to Razorcake. Let's work with each other.

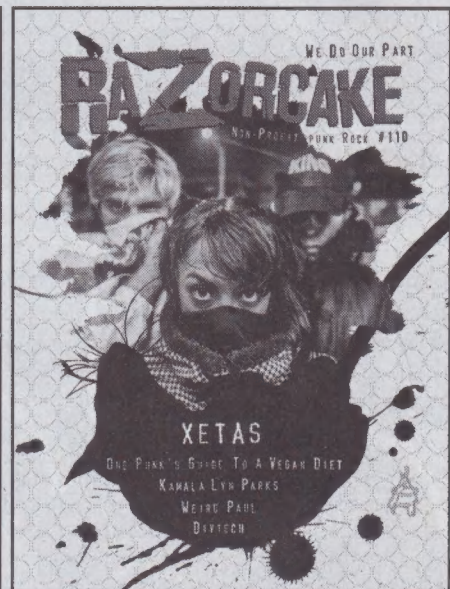
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A Reason to Believe, A Reason to Run

Abandoned churches and dry riverbeds became my main focal points on interstate highways when I spent full days staring out the window, waiting for that next destination. A reason to believe, a reason to run. In May of 2019 I went on my first reading tour. Between Akron, Ohio and Los Angeles, California I spent eight days reading in a multitude of settings. For someone who has spent the last decade being able to hide behind the buzz and distortion of punk bands while performing, it was both terrifying and revelatory. It's beginning to feel that new experiences are as close as you're going to get to a fountain of youth, and I definitely left this experience feeling rejuvenated. Or at least as much as one can after spending eight days driving across the country.

Being a member of this DIY community and its Economy of Favors is a great privilege. And not only did we experience something new everywhere we went, but we were able to see other people embarking on their own journeys and putting themselves out there. Some of these readings were really intimate, and sure, that might have just been because not many people showed up, but it led to building really encouraging atmospheres. These are the moments which build us as people and continue to fuel the creative spirit within us. The energy that buzzes between your ears as you wait for the bus. The inspiration of remembering seeing someone read something that left you breathless; someone who had come to the reading not intending to read at all. These moments are what I want to hold close to me. A reason to believe.

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"Better never means better for everyone... It always means worse for some."

—Margaret Atwood
The Handmaid's Tale

RIP
Roky Erickson
(1947-2019)

*If you have ghosts then
you have everything*

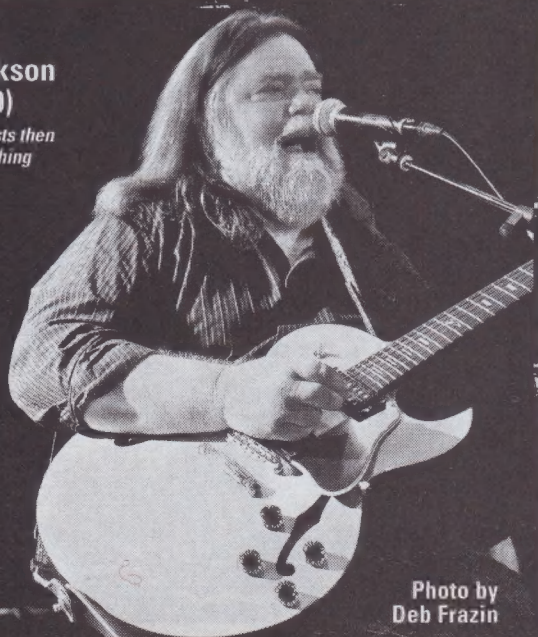


Photo by
Deb Frazin

Heading into Denver there were patches of snow along the hills from a storm a couple days prior. Luckily for us the sky was clear and blue. The drive from Kansas City had overstayed its welcome and we were eager to wrap it up. "John Henry Split My Heart" blasted from the stereo, as dark and heavy and inspiring and incomprehensibly beautiful as any song could be. I pounded the steering wheel with my fist as the band laid into the final crashing moments of the song. These are the moments that build us. The heartbreaking country music on a desolate highway after a long day of travelling. The brutal fucking truth of the highest caliber songwriting. A reason to run.

As the distance between who we once were and who we are now only gets longer, our core values become more crucial. Punk is as important as ever, but it can never close its doors to new ideas. And as punks we can't fear change or new experiences, no matter how uncomfortable it is. A friend told me the other day that they asked all the younger people they worked with what music they were currently listening to. It took my friend on this bizarre trek into a musical world that at first seemed totally insane, but ended with finding some stuff they really liked. The most goddamn punk thing you can be doing is trying something new. Get out there; see what this fucked up world has waiting for you around the bend. Test your beliefs, test your reasons. Fuel that creative spirit.

—Daryl

THANK YOU: If memory serves correctly, this is what Cristy called their "hard-looking Rancid" stare thanks to Kate Hoos for the photo and Lauren Denitizio for the graphic design; Bright beams of light through the bullshit of misinformation thanks to Bone Dust for Donna's illo.; "Medieval tapestries are weird as fuck." Indeed they are Bill Pinkel and thanks for Jim's illo.; A partial response to the eternal question of "What remains inside a black hole?" thanks to Brad Beshaw for Sean Carswell's triumphant return illo.; A bit of Slim Pickens circa Dr. Strangelove meets poorly spelled linur nots and attendant bad musical choices thanks to Steve Thueson for Norb's illo.; Black ink=pig's blood=school burns=literacy thanks to Laura Collins for Dale's illo.; Everyone should visit Watts Towers and the Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center when they're in L.A. thanks to RoQue Torres for the Puro Pinche illo.; It's all a huge sham. Proof positive the Chicken plays to a set list. Remove his ruckus patch from his punk vest thanks to Kat Wanish for the photo; Illuminated manuscripts were made prior to the advent of full bleeds in publishing, but there were motorcycles around 410 C.E. thanks to Billups Allen and Shane Milner for the One Punk's Guide to the Dark Ages (and, yes, yes Fucked Up and Dead Kennedys aren't grindcore, but the former has bubonic plague rats art work and the latter used a gruesome image. Neanderthal is legitimate banner holder of the genre, though); Realizing that people are more than the worst thing that they've ever done thanks to Rosie Gonce, Jon Mule, and Dylan Davis for the ABO (Abolish) Comix interview, photos, and layout; "Everything looked slimy and shrink wrapped" mixed with detailed, softer portraiture thanks to Ever Velasquez, Cam Evans, Lorien Lamarr, Mia Kang, Kate Hoos, and Lauren Denitizio for the Cristy C. Road interview, photos, and layout; Just like a rug that really ties a room together, a tambourinist capable of high jumps and higher energy really ratchets the Spiritual Cramp machine tight thanks Tim Brooks, Isaac, Gerard, Chris Bavaria, Senny Mau, and Eric Baskauskas for the interview, photos, and layout.

"You might remember a weird minute when Toyota got a Mohawk... If you feel you bought a Scion because of The Reigning Sound album, I'd love to hear more about it." —Billups Allen, Reigning Sound, Abdication...for Your Love LP (re-release on Merge). Thanks to 111's rotation of music, zine, and book reviewers: Jimmy Alvarado, Rich Cocksedge, Theresa W., Matt Average, Sean Arenas, Indiana Laub, Michael T. Fournier, Camille Reynolds, Keith Rosson, Craven Rock, Aphid Peewit, Ian Wise, Emma Alice Johnson, Matt Werts, Mike Frame, Kayla Greet, Chad Williams, Lorien Lamarr, Juan Espinosa, Ty Stranglehold, Art Ettinger, Paul J. Comeau, Ryan Nichols, Kurt Morris, Norb, Billups Allen, Chris Terry, Tim Brooks, Steve Adamyk, The Lord Kveldulfr, jimmy cooper, Jim Woster, Rick V., and Tricia Ramos.

DIY punk can't be fully captured, understood, or expressed by men. If you're a woman, womyn, girl, grrrl, transgender/agender/non-binary/genderqueer writer who's knowledgeable about punk, punctual, and open to editorial processes, drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or webcolumns for Razorcake. Diversity will only make us a better punk publication. Please help us out. (razorcake.org/contact)

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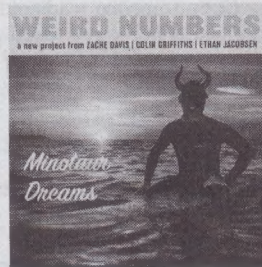
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XENU & THE THETANS
LP



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LP



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RAZORCAKE

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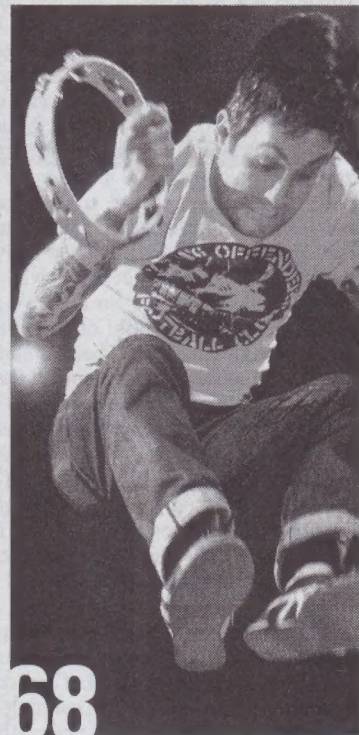
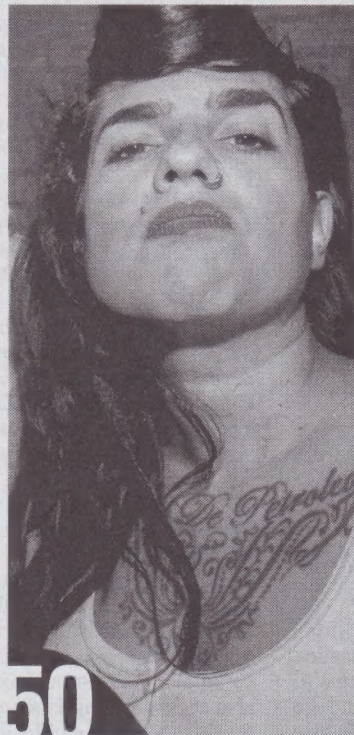
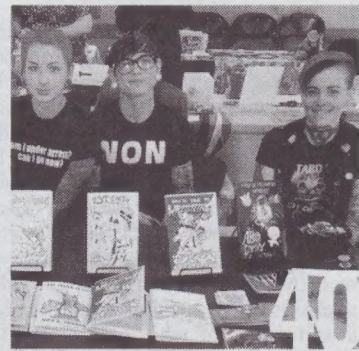
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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is.

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Kari Hamanaka, Rishbha Bhagi, Donna Ramone, Marcos Siref, Derek Whipple, Dayna Castillo, Ever Velasquez, Nicole Macias, Paul Silver, Matthew Hart, Chris Baxter, Kayla Greet, Jimmy Alvarado, Yvonne Drazan, Dale Drazan, Josh Rosa, Jennifer Federico, Ethan Shapiro, Elly Dallas, Steve Couch, Samantha McBride, Dino Everett, Skinny Dan, Alice Bag, Candace Hansen, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Jason Willis, Matt Average, Joe Dana, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Adrian Salas, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Kevin Dunn, Jennifer Whiteford, Steve Thueson, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Lauren Denitzio, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, CJ Miller, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, John Miskelly, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Chris Devlin, Emma Alice Johnson, Tim Brooks, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Chris Terry, Jackie Rusted, Art Fuentes, Dylan Davis, Becky Minjarez, Keith Rosson, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, Danny Rust, Jamie L. Rotante, Daisy Noemi, Eden Kittiver, Jesse Zeroxed, Garrett Barnwell, Nørb, Chris Mason, Tim Jamison, Kiyoshi Nakazawa, Shane Milner, James Rosario, Martin Wong, Rosie Gonce, Chris Kill, Eskander Fairweather, Cathy Hannah, Silas Haglund, Mikie Manzer, Sam Grinberg, Ollie Mikse, Oz Thompson, Philomena, Charlie Murphy, Andre Lux, Charlotte Pili, Jeremy Jones, Taleen Kali, Lorien Lamarr, Will Kenneth, Will Malkus, Alxis Ratkevich, RoQue Torres, Johnny and Elwood Wells, Billups Allen, Nick Riggs, Andrew Wagher, Abdul Vas, Mark Handski, and John Ross Bowie.

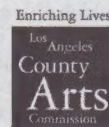
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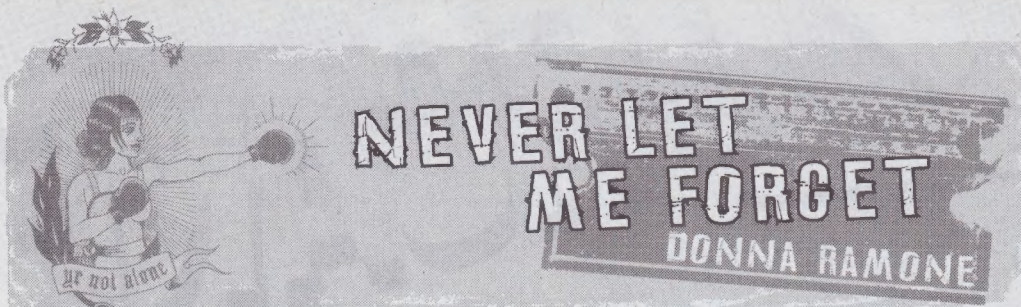


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**Unlearn,
research,
discuss,
repeat.**

What's a Terrorist?

I've been called a "terrorist" to my face, by scores of people, ranging from someone attempting small talk, another looking to relate to me, and a bunch were just shitty bigots. There was a Canadian band called "Terrorist" that made patches, and I sewed one on my jacket. It was a personal move to try and subvert the racist label I had been given after September 11, 2001.

Something I've discovered more recently, though, is that the people calling me a terrorist don't seem to actually know what a terrorist is, or why they think all Arabs/Muslims are terrorists. I watched someone, upon learning my family was from Bahrain and wanting to be nice to me, manage to call everything a "burka" (there's a hijab, abaya, niqab, and other feminine regional dress in the Middle East), ask if I speak "Saudi" (the language is Arabic, thanks) and explain to me that *everything* is bad in the *entire* Middle East specifically because of the Taliban—and it was like a lightning strike had lit the light bulb above my head. They had no clue that the Taliban was not ISIS, was not Al-Qaeda, and on and on. So here we go: one punk's guide to a handful of performatively Islamic groups that have been classified by the United States Department of State as a "Foreign Terrorist Organization" (FTO).

As of writing, there are sixty-three active designated organizations. Fifty-one of them have foundations that are Islamic-ish. There are no foreign white supremacist groups on the list. I'm not going to cover all of them, but here is a chronological collection of the ones the nightly news likes to toss around the most.

The only group I'm going to discuss that's not a designated foreign terrorist organization is The Muslim Brotherhood. They're one of the oldest organizations still running and are worth mentioning because conservatives lose their shit screaming about them. Begun as a Sunni group by a Muslim scholar and school teacher in 1928, their goal was to establish Egypt as a Muslim country, unite all Islamic countries, and liberate them from imperialism (Egypt, and nearly all of the Arab world, were British or French colonies at the time). They mostly did charity work (literacy, food donations, shelters) until getting into the political sphere later. They believe in uniting countries under Sharia—which I'm not even going to get into, but it's religiously inspired laws and no two Muslims in a room can fully agree on what they should be outside of not eating pork, abolishing interest-based

banking, and avoiding djinn (which are these ghost-demons the Quran mentions). These days, The Muslim Brotherhood says they're into free press, democracy, freedom of assembly, and political reform. They openly say their beliefs are anti-violent. They have satellite groups all over the Middle East and Africa, which are all separate with slightly different ideals at this point. They're also really conservative and have their own "manifest destiny," which would be the return of the Islamic Empire. The reason why anyone even bothers to talk about the Muslim Brotherhood is they became the ruling political party in Egypt after the 2011 revolution, and got Mohamed Morsi elected (until he was overthrown in 2013).

The Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) are a nationalist political faction founded in 1961. You may have heard of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was an FTO until 1991. PLF was generally active in the PLO, off and on. They made American headlines when they hijacked an Italian cruise ship in 1985 and murdered an elderly Jewish New Yorker on board. Abu Abbas was PLF leader from 1977 until 2004 when he was captured by U.S. troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom and died in their custody of reportedly natural causes. Their entire premise is to free Palestine by whatever means necessary.

Hezbollah (translated means "Party of God") is a Shi'a political party and military group powerhouse in Lebanon. Nearly every country taking the time to label terrorist organizations have Hezbollah on their list. They were founded in the 1980s, largely funded by Iran, with a strict anti-imperialist manifesto that sought to bring an "end to any colonialist entity on our land." Their manifesto also seeks to bring Phalangists to justice for their crimes against Muslims and Christians (the Phalangists are a political party that was a big part of the Lebanese Civil War, a fifteen-year war that took 120,000 lives, and let the people pick the government they want (which should definitely be the Islamic one but, hey, no pressure Lebanon). Hezbollah's military is larger than the Lebanese army, and they have a radio station, TV channel, a social services department, and hold a lot of seats in the Lebanese government. Since 2012, they have been fighting alongside the Syrian government in the Syrian Civil War against ISIS.

Hamas is like the Hezbollah of Palestine. Founded in the late 1980s as a Muslim

Brotherhood offshoot, they're a Sunni fundamentalist organization with social services and a military mission, and have been the ruling power over the Gaza Strip since 2007. Their only goal is for Palestine to be an independent country again, and they've committed an increasing number of crimes against humanity to make that a reality. They will not accept two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—it's all or nothing.

Al-Qaeda is my favorite one to hear non-Arabic speakers pronounce. They were founded in 1988 by dead terrorist rock star Osama bin Laden. They're out of Afghanistan and a caricature of them has been the antagonist of every Hollywood movie since they took responsibility for the September 11 attacks. They're terrifying fundamentalists, and led the world into incorrectly thinking words like "jihad" and "fatwa" meant "Muslim murder." They're the de facto government of Afghanistan now. Their reasoning for all of this was the repeated American military invasions and massacres in the Middle East. Al-Qaeda is like if a foreign military invaded, destabilized our economy and overthrew our government, and the right-wing militia dudes who only believe in white Jesus and The U.S. Constitution took over as the governing body.

The Taliban is also in Afghanistan (with their headquarters in Pakistan). They ruled about seventy-five percent of Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001 when the U.S. military invaded and overthrew everything. "Taliban" translates to "students," because it was literally made up of high school and college students who wanted to organize and fight in the Afghan Civil War. During their rule they routinely killed civilians, burned crops and homes, denied aid from the United Nations, and mounted a cultural genocide, destroying ancient monuments that predate Islam. They're still around but their power is nothing compared to what it was. And, it's true—their leaders did get arms, money, and training from the CIA and Saudi Arabia, but it's because they were part of the Pakistan Army at the time, so they could end the Soviet Union invasion happening in the 1980s.

The one we all know goes by many names. ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), Daesh, Islamic State—it's all the same organization. They didn't gain prominence until 2014, when they regularly beat the Iraqi government forces and captured the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. They're the ones with beheading and execution



BONE DUST | @BON3DUST

One punk's guide to a handful of performatively Islamic groups that have been classified by the U.S. Department of State as a "Foreign Terrorist Organization."

videos online. They also murdered thousands of civilians, specifically targeting Yazidi men and other non-Arab, non-Muslim groups, in a form of ethnic cleansing. Their propaganda machine is unreal: internet savvy, with supplemental DVDs, CDs, and posters with high production values, in twenty-three languages. They were incredibly adept at social media, especially Twitter. Disenfranchised angry teens never stood a chance, and neither did the old people running anti-terrorism departments. Their funding was like that of a mob: the majority of their money came from extortion and organized crime. They spread into Syria from Iraq, but as of March their last stronghold in Syria, a tent city, was defeated. Men have been killed or jailed and the women and children of ISIS are left to fend for themselves. Those trying to return to their home countries have largely been denied.

This isn't an exhaustive list by any means, but it hopefully gets across how using the term

"terrorist," even when someone specifically means "Islamic terrorist organization in the Middle East," could mean any number of groups with significantly different origins, countries, and goals. It isn't just awful solely because they exist and cause harm, it's bullshit that I have to be versed in this knowledge. I feel like the only weapon I have to combat the next xenophobic thing someone throws at me is a strongly stated, "Well, *actually*," while I push up my glasses. "Terrorism" doesn't even have an agreed upon definition. Is it violence and intimidation to create fear, or for political gain? Does it need to originate outside the country labeling it terrorism, or not?

Dig deep and see what you think terrorism is and what a terrorist looks like, and if it's an Arab man with a beard, dig further and ask yourself why. Now imagine who the victims of that terrorist are, and what do they look like. If it doesn't include the faces of the thousands of innocent Middle Eastern, primarily Muslim, people, reflect on why.

Now it's your turn to keep asking questions. Look at the similarities between these FTOs. Are they Muslims? Sure, but so are 1.8 billion other people. What motivates them specifically? They're all nationalists seeking power. Is it a byproduct from their colonization from white countries that lasted until the 1970s in many instances? How did they gain power? Were destabilized economies and governments after military invasions a contributing factor? Why was there a military invasion? Why was there a military invasion? Why the fuck was there a military invasion? I don't have all the answers; it's bigger than I can handle right now.

It's not an accident that an entire country now thinks all Muslims are "terrorists"—how did we get here? Keep going. Don't stop digging. Unlearn, research, discuss, repeat.

All of our lives depend on it.

—Donna Ramone



RAZORCAKE 07



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

I've been fighting
the urge to take
photos of churches.
It hasn't been easy.

Burn All the Churches

A Modest Proposal

When I heard the news that the Cathedral of Notre-Dame caught fire, my first reaction was, *Oh no*.

I immediately thought of all the tourists in harm's way. I worried that it might be an act of arson, or even a terrorist attack.

But as I watched the fire burn via video feeds on Twitter, it became apparent that no one had been hurt and the cathedral had been evacuated.

That made it okay for the public to collectively wring its hands on various platforms and websites over the tragedy unfolding in France.

Notre-Dame de Paris, Our Lady of Paris, was more than a historical attraction. It was a historical icon, a cultural institution. The cathedral had been the setting for a beloved Victor Hugo novel, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and, subsequently, an even more beloved Disney movie.

As visitors to the church from around the world uploaded their digital memories and flattering selfies with alarmed hashtags and sad-faced emojis, another thought crept into my consciousness.

A dark thought.

Let it burn.

For the last few years, I've been fighting the urge to take photos of churches. It hasn't been easy.

Every time I visit a new city, a church predictably sits in the center of town. Its steeple serves as a landmark for the community and visitors alike. Guidebooks point them out. Locals take you to them.

This is especially true in places like Europe and Mexico, where Catholicism has dominated for centuries. Churches are typically the oldest and most beautiful buildings in town. The touristic impulse takes hold and I whip out my camera to snap a few souvenirs that I might never look at again.

Sometimes I do it out of politeness, such as when a friend in Barcelona recently took me to see the Basilica of Santa Maria del Mar, which has also inspired a novel, *Cathedral of the Sea* by Ildefonso Falcones.

Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by the beauty of a building, like the first time I laid eyes on the Duomo di Milani last summer. The sun had set and the place was lit up like something out of a fantasy novel. It didn't

seem possible that this work of exquisite beauty had been crafted by human hands.

Sometimes the structures are elaborate, ornate, or unusual, like Gaudi's Sagrada Família, also in Barcelona, which fits all three categories.

Where does this urge come from?

It's more than an impulse to document my travels. As a lover of history, I appreciate old things. These buildings are so old I suspect I would feel the urge to photograph them no matter what their purpose.

Europe may be lousy with old churches, but in the United States they are an anomaly. What passes for old in America is relatively recent history for Europeans.

But it's no accident that so many of these old European edifices are in such good shape. Nor is it luck. An enormous amount of time and money went into building these structures and a great deal of time and money goes into maintaining them.

The Sagrada Família, for example, has been under renovation for as long as anyone can remember. In fact, the fire at Cathedral of Notre-Dame was caused by carelessness by workers renovating the church.

The point is that while other buildings fall into disrepair or ruin, churches are maintained, year after year, decade after decade, century after century. That includes those that have been bombed in wars or "destroyed" in fires. The church dutifully rebuilds and restores the place to its old grandeur.

When I step into an old stone church, whether it's a fancy gothic cathedral in France or a simple adobe church in Mexico, I feel a sense of history, and all that the church has endured. War, famine, Clint Eastwood movies.

These buildings have seemingly stood the test of time, a symbol of enduring faith. Even those without faith can acknowledge, *They don't build them like that anymore*. But that's not quite right.

If these structures are symbolic, it's power they represent, not something as abstract as faith.

Back when the United States was a glimmer in a French peasant's eye, the church wielded power and influence at a scale that the average American can scarcely comprehend.

The church lent its support to Catholic nations, shaped policies, and bullied the citizenry into compliance. It decided who

came into power and who got to keep it. It also engaged in extreme intolerance toward those whose only crime was to think outside the box.

Galileo, for instance, who made the bold claim that the earth was not the center of the universe, was investigated by the Roman Inquisition and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life.

The Italian philosopher and Dominican friar Giordano Bruno, wasn't so lucky. He was burned at the stake by the Roman Inquisition. (What, you were expecting the Spanish Inquisition?)

And if you made an enemy of the wrong cardinal, bishop, or priest, he'd call your faith into question and the next you knew you'd been branded a heretic and turned into a human kabob.

While the Catholic Church was amassing power and treating Europe like its own personal chessboard, it accrued staggering wealth. The church funneled much of its gold into building churches and cathedrals as a display of its power in this earthly realm.

Although the church's power has been diminished in recent decades, it persists.

Every church, every spire, every panel of stained glass serves as a reminder of what the church once was, and what it would like to be again.

When I was a kid I attended Catholic school and went to Catholic churches.

I was fully indoctrinated in its program of shame and self-denial. I was so brainwashed by the idea of eternal damnation that I convinced myself that when I was old enough I'd become a priest.

What better way to ensure one's entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven than by signing on with the god squad, so to speak?

As my body matured and I became familiar with the temptations of the flesh, my desire to take Holy Orders fell by the wayside. For years I considered myself a bad Catholic. I still believed in the teachings of the church, more or less, but took responsibility for living in a near perpetual state of mortal sin.

Once I enrolled in college, I started to think differently about the Catholic Church. I knew the church was full of hypocrites. I'd taken a course on the History of the Catholic Church when I was in high school,



BILL PINKEL

If you made an enemy of the wrong cardinal, bishop, or priest, he'd call your faith into question and the next you knew you'd been branded a heretic and turned into a human kabob.

and I learned all about the many popes who seduced children.

But the combination of critical thinking skills and some basic biology caused me to pose questions that couldn't be answered.

Where was the proof of god? Had the existence of heaven and hell been confirmed? What about the virgin birth? Or transubstantiation? What about Jesus's resurrection from the dead? How did that work exactly?

I realized there were no answers to these questions from the scientific community. Believers told me to believe. The faithful urged me to have faith. *You don't need to know the answers to these questions, they told me, to know that Jesus loves you.*

That was the beginning of my hardcore atheism. This period of my life persisted for many years, and was marked by anger at the institution that had fed me a diet of lies for so many years.

Much to my surprise, this stance softened somewhat when I went into recovery ten years ago. The rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous are full of believers, and I was letting all the god talk get in the way of my own progress.

Although I met many people in A.A.

who used the organization to proselytize, most of the people treated religion the way a drowning man treats a life preserver: as a desperate grab for a second chance, and who was I to deny them that?

Before too long I was reciting the Lord's Prayer at the end of the meeting and sharing the "miracle" of recovery. They were only words after all. But as my spiritual practice deepened, so did my anger at organized religion.

And in more recent years, as the GOP has weaponized fundamental Christianity, my disgust and disdain for the church in all of its forms has grown.

Evangelicals have aligned themselves on the wrong side of every social issue of the twenty-first century. Equal rights. Gay marriage. Abortion. The Muslim ban. The incarceration of asylum seekers. The list goes on and on.

Here are institutions dedicated to improving the lives of others, turning their backs on some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

While churches do a great deal of charitable work, the worst of the lot cause untold pain and suffering by abusing children and then covering it up.

And none of them pay taxes.

If you can make the argument that churches do more harm than good, then is it so bad if one or two burn down every year?

After all, these churches spend a lot of money on what amounts to beautification projects that would do a lot of good elsewhere. A few hours after the burning of Notre-Dame went viral, 650 million euros had been donated to rebuild the cathedral.

What if that money went to the homeless or kids with cancer or even public education that taught people to be good to each other, not because god said so but because there is good in every one of us?

For that kind of cash, perhaps we should burn down one church a week?

Or, maybe even one a day.

I think we'd find out pretty quickly who the true believers are and who are in it for the tax dodge.

So why stop there?

Why not burn them all down?

Would that really be so bad?

—Jim Ruland



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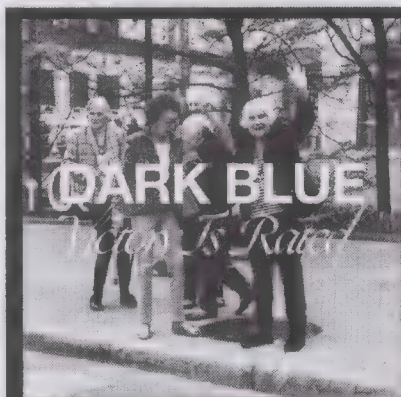
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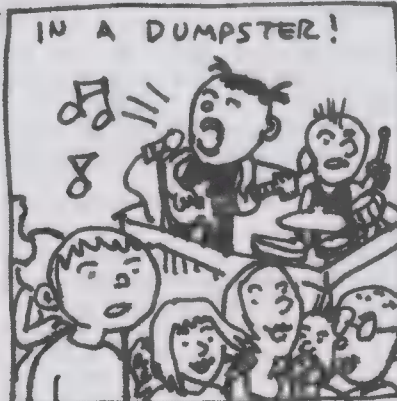
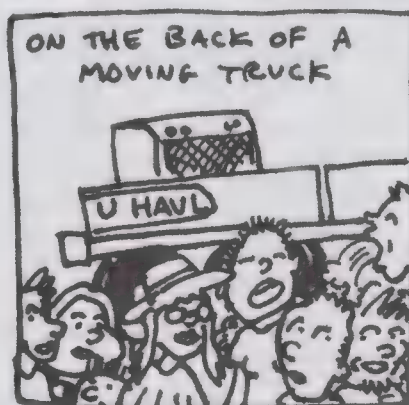
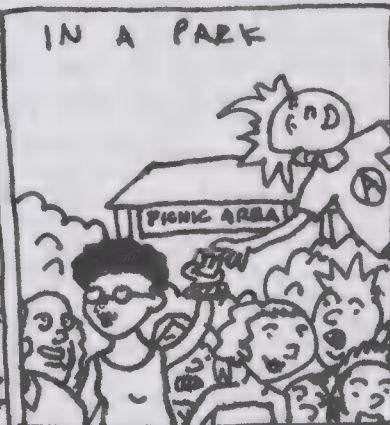
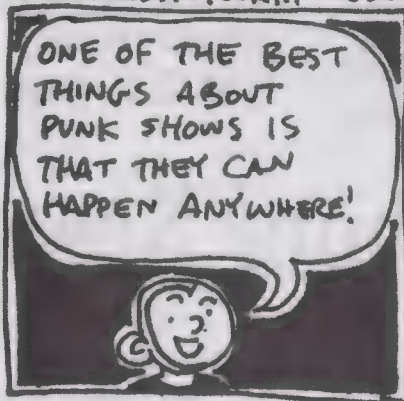


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A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

I focused on my career. Really. I was that stupid.

Transmissions from Outer Space

Sometimes, the shows you miss are the most memorable.

Let's go back to the spring of 1994. I lived in Atlanta. A couple of hours west of me, Man Or Astroman? was still a college band in Auburn, Ala. Though they played in Atlanta now and then, it seemed like they only came on nights when I had to work. But one night, I had a chance to catch them. My shift ended early. I skipped the shift drink, called my buddy Pete, swung by his house to pick him up, and got to the Midtown Music Hall just in time to discover the show sold out.

Pete and I went to a cheesy pool hall in the same strip mall. We drank a couple of beers and chased pool balls around a table for a few games. We bellied up at the bar. I hadn't seen Pete for a few weeks, so he had a fresh new batch of problems to fill me in on. He was cheating on his girlfriend, he told me. With her best friend, who lived in the room next door to him and his girlfriend. In the same house. The rooms shared a common wall. He'd decided to move out of the bedroom with his now ex-girlfriend and into the bedroom with her now ex-best friend. None of them had enough money to move out.

I asked myself, not for the first time, why I was still friends with this guy.

I caught a glimpse of myself in the bar mirror as Pete told his story. I had on a plain white T-shirt that I wore under my work shirt so I wouldn't have to wash my uniform after every shift. I still had on my work khakis. I looked like an asshole. Disappointment saturated me. If only I hadn't called Pete. If only he didn't live all the way the fuck out in Decatur. If only I'd gone to the show alone. If only I'd brought clothes to change into after my shift. If only the pool hall jukebox weren't playing a Garth Brooks song. If only. If only.

I did the one thing I could do to make the situation better. I said, "Let's call it a night."

On the way back to my truck, we passed the courtyard adjacent to the Midtown Music Hall. Man Or Astroman? was playing. Coco the Electronic Monkey Wizard's bass filled the lower register of the courtyard's sonic space. Birdstuff's drums rattled the strip malls windows. Star Crunch's guitar found another layer of reverb bouncing around that concrete square. Pete and I stopped to listen.

Do you remember those songs? The perfect debut that is *Is It... Man or Astroman?*; the seven inches that made up *Destroy All*

Astromen! Do you remember how good it was to listen to instrumental punk before the movie *Pulp Fiction* came out and made surf music trendy? We couldn't hear the sci-fi movie soundbites through the Midtown Music Hall walls. It was only drums, guitar, and bass in that courtyard. Driving and catchy and fun, but so simple. Beyond the gimmicks and the stories of extraterrestrials coming to bring us surf punk, there was just the music. For a few minutes, it was perfect. Better than being inside.

I've been learning to play those old Man Or Astroman? songs lately. I'm doing this partly because thirty years ago, I learned the basics of making chords and strumming a guitar, and I never really progressed beyond that. I didn't feel like I needed to. I'm a punk rocker. Three chords and a 4/4 beat is all I need. Sort of.

The problem is, after thirty years, playing the same three chords in the same rhythm gets boring. The second problem is that, to advance beyond three-chord punk, most guitar courses teach you how to play blues solos. I hate blues solos. I hate them even more when they descend into classic rock. I asked myself, how can I learn to play melodies without playing the blues or classic rock. The answer, of course, is surf. So I started learning how to play surf guitar.

But to say I did this to become a better guitar player isn't exactly honest. I do want to be a better guitar player. That's true. It's more fun to play when you can play well. Really, though, I've been learning surf as a way to get out of my head. It's been a tough year. I got stuck in a bad situation at work. It started sucking all my energy. What I had left over, I spent on trying to untangle myself from that bad situation. I got home from work most days feeling siphoned out. Dry. Empty. I wanted to get drunk and get high and forget everything, but I'd already spent years of my life drunk and high. I knew enough to know that self-medicating never works. Not for very long, anyway. So if beer and weed were off the table, well, at least I had a guitar and amp sitting right there in my living room.

I started with the first song on the first Man Or Astroman? album. "Taxidermist Surf." It's a simple riff. Half of the notes are on open strings. A few bar chords fill it in, and a single string walk-down rounds it out. Even if you don't play much guitar,

you could learn it today. The tab is online. Start slowly.

I finally got inside a Man Or Astroman? show about a year later. I was living in Flagstaff, Ariz., and they were coming through Phoenix. Todd Taylor and I decided to make the two-hour drive to see them. Halfway down, the traffic on the freeway came to a complete stop. A semi had overturned up ahead, blocking all three lanes of I-17. No one was going anywhere until that truck was moved. We turned off the engine, got out of the car, and hung out in the summer desert sun for an hour or two while we waited. It was frustrating, yes, but we were prepared. I'd already filled Todd with horror stories about missing the band because the show had sold out. We couldn't buy advance tickets, so we'd planned on getting to the venue several hours early. Even with a two-hour delay, we had time to get to the venue, buy tickets, find a burrito joint, eat, have some beers, and get to the show way before the opening act started.

And how were Man Or Astroman? Worth it. Worth every bit of it. I can romanticize how good they sounded in that Atlanta courtyard in 1994, but it's better to be inside.

I'm now somewhat obsessed with learning how to play Man Or Astroman? songs. I came across a website dedicated to surf guitar. In an almost-forgotten discussion thread, one of the members posted a folder with tabs for most of the songs. The tabs are incomplete, but they're close. This is even better. I have to listen to the songs and fill in the missing parts by ear. It's more challenging that way.

It also has me thinking a lot about time. Playing music is nothing if not manipulating time. Playing punk or surf guitar is even more of this. Songs are usually played at tempos over 150 beats per minute, and often go up to 210 bpm. Almost always, you're playing eighth notes, sometimes sixteenth notes. So you're dividing a second into six or even twelve attacks on a guitar string. Paradoxically, the only way to do things in fractions of a second is to slow time in your head.

But that's not the relationship with time I'm talking about.

I'm really talking about playing guitar all the time. I haven't done this since I was a kid. Doing it feels like being a kid. And there's something in our culture that tells



BRAD HAW

We're so entrenched in capitalist ideology that we think of time as "ours," a currency that we "spend" or "invest" or "waste."

us being an adult means we can't spend ridiculous amounts of time sitting around the house, doing things like learning to play surf guitar. Especially if we're doing this the way I'm doing it: alone in a room, headphones plugged into an amp, playing for no one but me. Culturally, I must be wasting time by putting this much energy into playing music. I'm not even in a surf rock band. I'm not trying to make any kind of money off this activity. What's wrong with me?

The biggest problem with this kind of thinking is how insidiously capitalist it is.

We're so entrenched in capitalist ideology that we think of time as "ours," a currency that we "spend" or "invest" or "waste." How can we maximize time for peak production? How can we produce things that allow our worth to progress in the marketplace? How can we trade time for the one thing that provides meaning over everything else:

money? These ideas are so deeply engrained in our culture that we don't even question how intensely ideological it is to talk about "spending" or "wasting" time. Our lives become a commodity that we have to get maximum exchange value for. And so we tell ourselves that we have more important things to do than sit around learning how to play songs from a quarter century ago. Or, if we do spend time that way, it's only okay as part of a "bucket list."

This is exactly the kind of thinking that got me into my bad situation at work. I started acting as if I didn't question this ideology at all. I focused on my career. Really. I was that stupid. I acted like progressing in my career was actually a meaningful thing to do. I moved up in the ranks until I was miserable.

The obsession with Man Or Astroman? helped pull me off this track. I couldn't learn how to play most of their songs without

learning other tricks—palm muting, double-picking, using the tremolo bar in the middle of a song, and so on. I started learning other songs. Simple old instrumental standards like "Wipeout," "Rebel Rouser," and "Rumble." I learned silly songs like "Tequila." Every time I play it, I feel a little like Pee Wee Herman. It's so absurd that it matches the absurdity I see around me. Sometimes, when no one is around, I'll even recite the lines that precede the guitar parts in Man Or Astroman? songs, then launch into the tune.

I know it's goofy as hell, but doing this pulled me out of depression and allowed me to fix my work situation. Learning Man Or Astroman? songs made me understand that the only thing I'm really doing with time is finding ■ rhythm within it and playing something in that rhythm to make me happy.

—Sean Carswell



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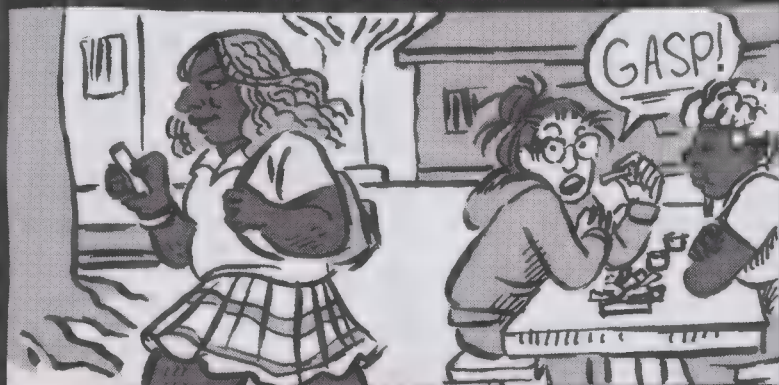
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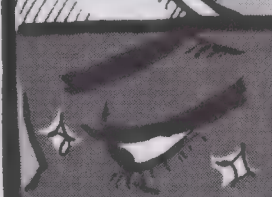
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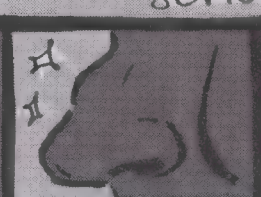
Wow! Luna is sooo pretty. Have you ever noticed how pretty she is? Wow. I'm aghast.



Yes, I have a word of the day app on my phone and yes, today's word is aghast. But seriously though.



Her eyes!



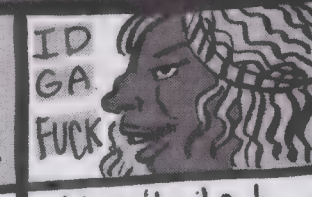
Her nose!



Her hair!



Her style!



Her 'tude!



Why don't you ask her out?

GASP!

I'D LITERALLY CROAK!



FIGURATIVELY.



God, these fries are stale af.

BUT ACTUALLY LITERALLY.



AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

REV. NORB

The Dumbest
Goddamn Record
In The History Of
Recorded Sound™.

Putting The Hamer Down: The Lingering Horror of the Mid-'80s

Certainty is a wonderful thing. Like youth, however, certainty is too often wasted on the young. When I was a teenager, I knew virtually everything there was to know and held virtually every opinion there could be to have, and I held them *firmly! Resolutely! Unwaveringly!* Now I'm old and I'm not sure about jack shit other than the inescapability of death and taxes—and even there, if you make enough money in this country, the “taxes” part of the equation is optional. Still, there are still a few things of which I'm at least still fairly certain: I'm pretty sure that “A Rickle in Time” is the best *Rick and Morty* episode. I'm fairly certain that Quisp kicked ass on Quake. I know that White Spy is better than Black Spy and black checkers are better than red checkers. What I lack these days in High Truths, I compensate for by handfuls of hoarded Lesser Certitudes. And, with every Lesser Certitude I hoard, the universe shifts ever-so-slightly into better focus, my path becomes oh-so-imperceptibly straighter, humanity's collective burden that much lighter. With this in mind, it pleases me to be able to share my latest hard-fought Lesser Certitude with you, that you, too, may bask in its knowledgeable glow and be made all the more whole as a result. My most recently discovered Lesser Certitude is this:

SSD's Break It Up album is the DUMBEST goddamn record in the history of recorded sound.

...now, I know what you're thinking: *Yeah, Norb, you're about thirty-four years late to the party on this one, bro. NO SHIT it sucks. That's hardly news, let alone qualified to rate as a Lesser Certitude!* Brothers and sisters, I implore you, hear me out! It's not merely that *Break It Up* should be hauling garbage—it's not even that *Break It Up* should be hauled away as garbage—it's that *Break It Up* is so *amazingly* garbage—an utter failure on so many levels—that it elevates all of humanity to a higher plane as a direct consequence of our non-involvement! Did you have anything to do with this record? *Me neither! Rise, then, and feel the esteem which stems from your non-participation! Feel it I say!* This record is so *bad* it makes the rest of us look good, even thirty-four years later! *This record is such an utter and total embarrassment that it lets Bad Religion's Into The Unknown album off the hook, and I assure you I would not issue*

this claim frivolously!!! Now, I admit, I was never a super-huge fan of the band, even in their SS Decontrol days. *The Kids Will Have Their Say* was kind of a classic—eighteen songs on a 12" 45 was pretty hardcore in 1982—but it really wasn't all *that* great of a record, even at the time. Strewn amidst all the sub-sixty-second thrashers, the record's best and most memorable song was the noisy three-minute-plus drone of “How Much Art,” which is kind of like if “Damaged” was the best song on *Damaged*. As hardcore classics go, it wasn't particularly exceptional. I was already off the bus by 1983's *Get It Away*, the poster child for post-straight-edge-being-at-all-interesting straight edge records. By 1984, bands were still *playing* hardcore—mostly from a lack of any kind of coherent idea as to what else to do—but nobody (with the standard exceptions of noobs, latecomers, and dumb little kids) was really *listening* to it. People weren't playing hardcore records at parties anymore; they were spinning old Kiss albums. As ridiculous as the new breed of “heavy metal” bands like Twisted Sister and Quiet Riot were, after a years-long diet of music that—let's face it—more often than not sounded like it was generated by a bunch of wind-up monkeys playing toy instruments in the basement, it started to seem like mainstream rock wasn't quite the dead end we'd all been thinking it was, and hardcore wasn't quite the Road to Utopia we'd been selling it as. Thus, bands began to peel off the HC beeline, and head in another direction—more often than not, a metallic one. Whether this defection was caused by honest boredom, honest greed, or some mysterious (but honest) cocktail of the two is not mine to say; in any event, halfway through 1984, the punk bands were gamely trying to *rawk*. Accent on “trying” (I knew it was game over for hardcore when I saw Black Flag unpacking their merch in April 1984 and their *My War* T-shirts had “SIDE 2”—the side of the record with nothing but three long, slow, Rollins-screaming-his-lungs-out-in-soul-rending-anguish songs on it—in three-inch letters on the back. I realized at that point we were all doomed for years to come. And we were). The problem, of course, is that punk bands don't really *rawk*. I always figured that if they were any good at *rawking*, they wouldn't've been punk bands in the first place, they would have been shaking their booties in a cloud of Aqua Net® and Par

64 diffusion straight out of middle school. I mean, I *get* it and all—hardcore had grown stale, and you can't fault a band for trying to do something with a little more aesthetic moxie behind it—but there's something to be said for staying in your fucking lane as well. Thus, instead of leaving the punk bands to play punk and the rock bands to play rock—tasks at which one would rightfully imagine each side was uniquely qualified—we have punk bands playing rock, which is bound to sound about as good as rock bands playing punk, which, if you've ever listened to *The Spaghetti Incident?*, is not particularly good at all.

This alone is not sufficient qualification for the mantle of *Dumbest Goddamn Record in the History of Recorded Sound*, however. Sure, the music's crap, but SSD are hardly alone in contributing to the historically vile stench emanating from the Punk-Bands-Playing-Mediocre-Rock-Music department. I'm sure there's some TSOL record out there where they're all wearing headbands that's even worse. What puts *Break It Up* in a class by itself is not merely the mediocrity of the music—what puts the album truly over the top/under the bottom is the *packaging's all-encompassing attempt to define the band as a glossy, deluxe Rock Juggernaut and its complete and utterly comedic failure to do anything of the sort*. Let's start with the logo: A simple, block-lettered “SSD” will no longer suffice for our up-and-coming Rock Titans; the logo now needs to be tilted, and shaded, and have beveled edges. O, those beveled edges! *Nothing screams TAKE US SERIOUSLY AS A ROCK BAND like beveled edges!* (by this same token, all anyone needs to do to make Kansas a punk band is to paint their logo in white on a black leather jacket. **THIS IS EXACTLY HOW IT WORKS.**) Next, let's look at the front cover: Whereas earlier records would have, say, a black and white photo of a crew of punk rock hooligans dashing up the capitol steps, *Break It Up* features some beige and greyish splotches that, upon closer inspection, appear to be a bird's-eye-view of a simplistic skyscraper being struck by a wrecking ball swinging from a foggy street light (which might be a guitar). The intent, of course, was to deliver a full-color, photo-realistic, highly lifelike scene of stylized ROCK DESTRUCTION—sort of like those Sweet album covers after they stopped being good, where they'd have



STEVE THUESON | @STEVE_THUESON

By 1984, people weren't playing hardcore records at parties anymore; they were spinning old Kiss albums.

something that sort of looked like a huge tornado blasting through the furrows of ■ farmer's field, but, on closer inspection, was really a humongous phonograph stylus in the grooves of a mighty record, because ROCK WAS BIG AND POWERFUL AND REAL AND HUGE and you were just some dumb little speck of shit who should look on in awe and be grateful for the privilege of doing so. The end result looked more like somebody barfed on some Popsicle® sticks. Yet, as bad as the cover is, and as bad as the music was, it's not until you get to the back cover that the wretched, ham-fisted, club-footed *hubris* really sinks in all the way. The back cover "graphics," such as they are, consist of nothing more than ■ few columns of Times New Roman set against ■ solid yellow background. The first column displays each band member's name, tabbing to a second column listing their instrument, which tabs to a third column detailing the *brand* of instrument they play, because that's some pretty necessary shit right there. Thus, instead of merely "Alan Barile" and "Rhythm Guitar," we get "Alan

Barile" and "Rhythm Guitar" and "BC Rich Warlock"—the BC Rich® Warlock™ being, of course, the ultimate metal dork cliché guitar of all time. Let's pause here. This point cannot be understated:

This band WANTS you to know that their guitar player plays a BC Rich Warlock.

...they also apparently want you to know that neither they nor anyone at their record label can spell "rhythm," because they've spelled it "rythym." It's like a punch line for a musician joke: *How many rhythm guitarists does it take to spell "rhythm?"* One assumes the answer is "I don't know, but it just crawled out of your BC Rich Warlock." The drummer is then listed. He plays "Gretch" drums. I'm sure the people from Gretsch®—with an "S"—were busting ass to assemble ■ major sponsorship deal for this guy the moment the record dropped. Christ, it's a good thing they didn't mention if he played Zildjian cymbals. The bass player, meanwhile, is listed as playing ■ "Hammer

Blitz"—which seems legit, until you realize that they meant he played a *Hamer® Blitz™* bass. Not to point too fine ■ point on it, but... fucking DUHHHH, ya know??? It's not that horrible of ■ sin to play mediocre rock music, not that big of a deal to have a lame album cover, not that fatal of a flaw to be shitty spellers. However, when you play mediocre rock music operating under ego-tweaking delusions of non-punk grandeur, when your album cover that looks like beveled edges, barf, and Popsicle® sticks is supposed to bowl us over with the massiveness of your Rock Deluxeness, and when you're trying to impress the plebes by listing off all the cheesy-ass metal gear on which you ply your half-baked trade *and you can't even spell the fucking shit properly*, then you have, in fact, created The Dumbest Goddamn Record In The History Of Recorded Sound™.

Then again, hold that thought: I don't think I've ever heard *How We Rock*.

Love,
—Nerb





I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DALE

For as long as
I remember, I
loved reading.

Reading—It Filled the Brain Pudding of a Young, Smart-Mouth Bass

For as long as I remember, even before kindergarten, I loved reading. Part of my initial fascination with the printed word came from sitting down with my ma, who made it a point to read with us three kids as much as possible. Although I have no children of my own to pass this brain building on to, I'm a firm believer in offering sit-downs with whoever's kidlings desire to do so. I never thought of being a teacher, even being ahead one or two grades in elementary school when it came to reading, writing, or spelling.

My teachers often noted on my report cards that, although I was meeting their standards with an average/above average work load, I needed to apply myself to attain my full potential. There were a few outstanding teachers who honestly cared, but a lot of the teachers who flapped their yaps about my "potential" couldn't give two shits whether or not I actually tried. A good number of them were there to just tame us monkeys and collect their checks. But this isn't about teachers who like warm seats. This is about my relationship with reading and exactly where it took me.

1977: When I first started to get serious into music around the second grade, my interest leaned heavily into the magazine territory of reading material, with publications like *CREEM* and *Circus*. In the years to follow, I remember older kids in my neighborhood or at my school trading copies of the latest issues with each other, and us pestering our elementary school librarian why we couldn't get music mags for our library. The closest titles we had in our library were issues of *Dynamite* and *Bananas*, two Scholastic publications that were basically kid's magazines packed with humor, music/TV celebrities, and age-appropriate *National Lampoon*-ish satire that was always good for some yuks. *Fun Fact*: *Bananas* often featured a comic strip called *Joe*, which was written and illustrated by John Holmstrom, the same cartoonist and writer who was co-founder of the infamous *PUNK* magazine a few years before in 1975 and also did a grip of artwork for the Ramones.

Reading as much music material as I could get my paws on, it was only natural I gravitated into *MAD* magazine territory. As strange as it seems for a kid in elementary school to be reading a satire magazine like *MAD*, I thoroughly dug it, really getting into

the "usual gang of idiots" offerings with every issue I could get from garage sales, thrift stores, and scoring stacks every now and then next to bundles of old newspapers and other magazines in the trash. My fave artists from *MAD* were always Al Jaffee (*Snappy Answers to Stupid Questions*, his hilarious invention strips, and his inside back cover fold-ins), Sergio Aragonés (most known for his countless funny animations between the magazine's panels and page borders), Antonio Prohías (*Spy vs. Spy*), and Jack Davis (illustrated a ton of *MAD*'s movie satires, not to mention the movie marquee poster for one of my favorite films from the '70s, *The Bad News Bears*). As much as I owe my ma for getting me going early on with my reading—besides my father, of course—props must be given to *MAD* for adding to my already goofy personality and smart-assedness. Whenever I'd get into serious trouble at home or school, my *MAD* pile was usually the first thing to get confiscated, but it was too late by then. The hook was permanently set in the childhood yapper of this smart mouth bass.

Horror movies fascinated me from early on, but there was a period during that time as a rug rat that some of the artwork and photography used in books the horror movies were based on just plain creeped me out. Some of it made me uneasy to the point of being spooked. It may sound weird, but at the time, some of this artwork and photography seemed more frightening than their movie counterparts.

A short time before I saw *The Exorcist* for the first time at the drive-in during its five year anniversary re-release in 1978, my evil grandmother (not the good gran who lived out of state) had a hardcover copy of the novel sitting on the bookshelf in her apartment. Wondering what the heck an exorcist was, I pulled the book off the shelf. The first thing I noticed was the photo on the dust jacket cover under the book's title. The unfocused shot is a close-up of a girl's face, and while that doesn't sound like much, it goes back to the old adage of what you can't see is what's unsettling. Imagination kicked in. When evil grandma saw me rifling through the book, she took it and put it back on the shelf, telling me, "That book isn't for children." Yeah, that'll nip it in the bud; tell a kid something is only for adults and to

keep out of it. Perfect. From then on, I tried my best to read parts of her copy on the sly, then finding used paperback versions of it in thrift stores. Looking back, I can see why a few of the adults in the thrift stores raised an eyebrow at me sitting on the floor, looking through pages of that book with its familiar dark purple cover and large white font. That cover photo became even creepier after I saw the movie a short time later.

(There's weirdness about the actual photo used for the book's cover. Actor Shirley MacLaine insisted for years that author William Peter Blatty swiped a picture of her daughter, Sachi Parker, to use for the cover. After the film was released, some critics suggested the mother/daughter relationship in the movie was really just a thinly-disguised version of MacLaine and Parker. MacLaine got super pissed and accused Blatty of exploiting their friendship. Since Blatty passed away in 2017, we may never know. I'd love to know, as other fans would, who exactly was in that photo, and where is it today?)

Going to Kmart in the '70s, I always made a point to check out the magazine and book section, usually right before or after flipping through the record bins. During one of our visits, I came across a paperback version of Stephen King's *Carrie*. Blazoned across the black cover was a photo of Carrie standing in her prom dress, soaked in pranky pig's blood, with that menacing stare that said "shit's about to fatally go down," but I didn't know all of this at that time. I was tripping out, because not only had I never seen anything like it, but I hadn't seen the movie yet. The film came out a year prior in 1976, and the reprint I was holding coincided with the film's recent release with a still shot from it. Cracking the book open to the middle where there were assorted photo stills from the movie, the last picture burned an image in my mind, even worse than the cover shot. It was a close-up of Carrie holding her hands up in front of her face right after she got splattered with the bucket of pig's blood. The shot was in black and white, but the look on her face was creepy as all fuck (props to Sissy Spacek for her rad work in that film, and six degrees Ramones props to P.J. "Riff Randell" Soles who made her film debut here, too). Even more than the unfocused cover photo on the dust jacket of *The Exorcist*, that



LAURA COLLINS | @lauracollinsart

Whenever I'd get into serious trouble at home or school, my MAD pile was usually the first thing to get confiscated.

black-and-white still of *Carrie* gave me the willies. When I finally saw the movie some years later, I totally got why they used a still from that unforgettable scene.

Also in Kmart was a rack of Super 8 films (remember, this was the '70s) near their camera and photo processing counter. These films were adapted versions of popular movies people could buy and watch at home on their film projectors. Although we had a regular (silent) 8mm movie camera and projector at home, we never bought any of the Super 8 (some with sound) versions. They were always too expensive, especially since they weren't full movie versions anyway. I always liked looking at the boxes the film reels came in, usually a small, flat cardboard box with a printed label pasted on the front, sometimes using the original movie poster artwork.

Besides my usual perusing of anything *Planet of the Apes*-related, one of the titles that caught my eye was *Bucket of Blood*. Not knowing this was a dark comedy horror movie originally released in 1959, the illustrated artwork on the box made me stop and stare. There was a woman in a dress who appeared to be drenched in wax beside the words "this sculptor worked with wax... and real people!" On the right, the words *BUCKET OF BLOOD* atop a blood cascade poured into what looked like a large soup bowl (not a bucket, as the title suggests), with some guy holding a white sculpture of a head (or is it a sculpture?) in front of some bearded man. I immediately thought how weird it was that an illustration of blood would be slapped on the front label of a box, but now that I think about it, where was that reasoning when I picked up the bloodied-cover of *Carrie* over

in the book section? When I finally caught this Roger Corman-directed classic years later (Corman also produced *Rock 'n' Roll High School*), the illustration on that Super 8 box I recalled as a kid seemed straight-up campy. Additional Ramones fun fact: Dick Miller, who stars as the not-so-bright Walter Paisley in *A Bucket of Blood*? He also played the police chief in *Rock 'n' Roll High School*:

Principal Togar: "Those Ramones are peculiar."

Police Chief Klein: "They're ugly. Ugly, ugly people."

Peculiarity and ugliness are golden. I think I read that somewhere.

—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com





Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

Tim Barry at a house in Los Angeles, March 15 2009, the night before an acoustic show with Josh Small and Austin Lucas. I can not believe ten years passed by like that. Love the song list on the guitar!

RESIST!

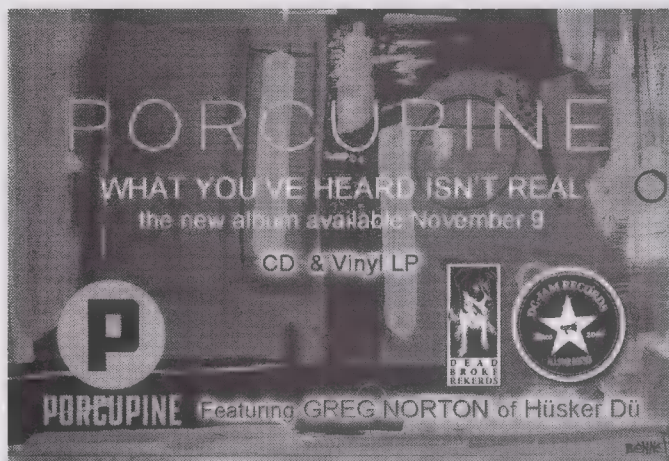
#3

IN WHICH A LIFE-LONG GRIFTER,
HAVING SKIRTED THE LAW FOR
MUCH OF HIS LIFE, FEELS HE
UNDERSTANDS THE LEGAL
SYSTEM.

Impeachment



GO AHEAD! I ALREADY GOT MINE! SEE YA LOSERS! SAD!



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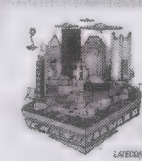
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'DARKNESS, TOGETHER'



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'CRASH FORWARD' • MAR 1



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PURO PINCHE POETRY Y CUENTOS

EDITED BY EVER VELASQUEZ AND EUGENIA NICOLE

you
was just telling me
lies
just
to get between my
thighs

Waiting

When
I watch you sitting there,
waiting
on ■ doorbell to ring
waiting
for your order from the person who is killing you slowly
I
think to myself, how can I help? What can I do?
—Tammeka

Alone

alone
through the dark night
no
one to talk to
making
things work out
forgetting
everyone
healing
through this rough pain that I've had for weeks
revenge
never ends
it
keeps going
like
waves along the beach
—Anonymous

My Soul

I
have been silent about who I be
the
light that emits from my soul dimmed
quiet,
afraid of being wrong
afraid
of being right, afraid of the world...
—Anonymous

Damaged

quit
telling me my damage has expired
when
I know it's still with me
I
may never forget what I felt that day
many
thought I was just lying
never
thought people could be so cold blooded
it
sounded like you never had a soul
—Anonymous

The First Time

the
first time I felt really alive
was
when I looked into your eyes
you
had me so hypnotized
Boy,
oh Boy you stayed on my mind
all
the time
in
being with you, I had won a prize
I
was so happy you was by my side
things
went perfect at first
until
I realized
you
was just telling me lies
just
to get between my thighs
should
have known they were lies
but
you had me so hypnotized
boys
tell so many lies
that's
why these ninjas just a waste of time
I
gotta keep them off my mind
—Anonymous

You DON'T

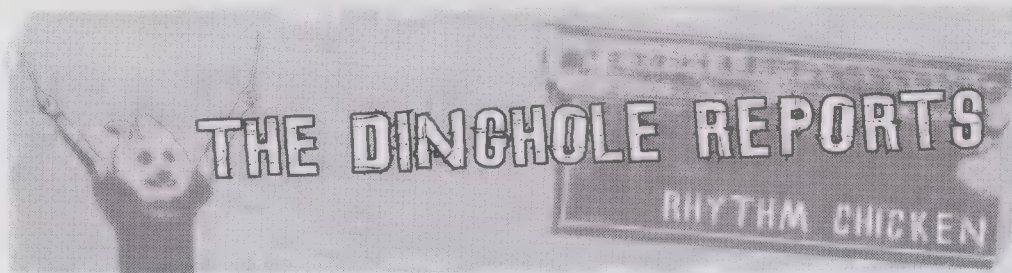
you
were like my mother
I
looked up to you, you looked out for me
little
did I know you'd turn out to be
the
way you are now
what
has gone through your brain?
who
has deceived you?
who
have you betrayed?
do
you even have love for me anymore?
you
have proven that I no longer mean anything
that's
why feelings have changed
I
no longer feel the same way
as
if your blood weren't running through my
veins,
always
the same damn situation
a
never
ending explanation
no
more love will I give to you
—Anonymous

This is our second issue highlighting The Watts Poets—students who, with the help of their English teacher Bridget Valles—are currently in high school in South Central Los Angeles. We created this column to highlight the voices of folk who haven't been given the platform to speak freely. It is important to us to publish poems from their personal experiences. Holding a safe and brave platform is needed and necessary. Five of these poems are anonymous. Just because a poet doesn't want to give their name doesn't mean they don't have something important to say or shouldn't express themselves. Sometimes the greatest power is the power behind anonymity.

Love and light,
—Ever Velasquez a.k.a. the girl about town







Milwaukee's hardcore goofballs!

The Dirtiest Chickenhead in Punk Rock

I became somewhat of a travel addict in my mid-twenties. I was lucky enough to travel around most of the country with a punk rock band. It's a special kind of traveling when you're with a punk rock band. You are in a different medium- to large-sized city every night. You are on a fairly tight budget. Most of your time is spent on the highway or in a grimy rock club. If you're lucky, you might find the time to take in a kitschy tourist trap here or there, but rocking the punk is your prime directive. More often than not, I missed the main popular attractions of each city, but I still loved simply getting out there and seeing the world outside of Wisconsin.

It's been about twenty years since I've traveled with a band, but still I can strike up regional discussions with various folks from around the lower forty-eight. You're from Denver? You ever been to the Raven Club or the Mercury Cafe? Oh, New York City, I had some fun in St. Marks Place. Cleveland, yeah I've been to Peabody's Down Under. St. Louis, oh I spent a night around High Point. Texas, huh? Yeah, I could really go for some Whataburger right now! Utah, boy I will never forget driving through that Virgin River Gorge! If you're from Baltimore you *must* know what scrapple is! More often than not, you don't get to see the Statue of Liberty or the Grand Canyon, but you do remember all the quirky little details of each destination.

After my band traveling was done I had trouble just sitting tight in northern Wisconsin. I had to keep getting out. It always took some frugal budgeting, but I usually found the means to get somewhere far away for a week or two. I took quite a few adventurous trips around Europe before finally moving to Poland in 2001. While living in Krakow I took full advantage of my location to take many quick and cheap mini-vacations to all the obscure and weird corners of Eastern Europe. Still, it was the lessons learned in those early punk rock travels that dictated many aspects of my later adventures.

Last summer I was so very lucky to marry the beautiful Mrs. Hen, someone who loves to travel possibly more than I do. Last autumn she proposed this winter's big trip. She has always wanted to go to Peru and hike the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. Such a trip had honestly never crossed my mind. Neither of us had ever been to South America, but as soon as she suggested it I

already knew it was a done deal. What did I know about Peru? Not much, really. I just pictured Indiana Jones sprinting through a jungle being chased by a giant rolling boulder about to squish him. My very limited Spanish skills have been picked up from Sesame Street and the many kitchens I've worked in over the years. I wasn't the best prepared Wisconsinite for such a trip, but I wanted to be surprised. Also, I'm not sure why, but I expected to find less than zero punk rock on this trip.

We landed in the ancient city of Cusco, nestled in the Andes. We stepped out of the airport and instantly noticed the gorgeous panorama of mountains surrounding the city. Once we arrived at our hostel, we were faced with our first flight of stairs. This city being at an altitude of about 12,000 feet, simply climbing up that first set of stairs left us shockingly winded. Again, I pictured that giant rolling boulder, but this time it was an out-of-breath version of *me* running from it. We spent our first three days exploring the region around Cusco and acclimating to the high altitude and lack of oxygen. Our trip on the Inca Trail would be a four-day guided hike ending at Machu Picchu. I had to convince myself I would survive.

For three-and-a-half days we hiked through what they call the Cloud Forest, a high-elevation rainy jungle micro-climate that blankets this area of the Andes. At times we found ourselves hiking below, in, and above the clouds. I could go on for another thousand words on how unbelievably beautiful that hike was, but I'll just say that it was unbelievably beautiful. Each day we hiked up and down various mountain passes, along steep ledges, and through some truly outstanding scenery. Each night we caught up with our trekking company—the porters carrying the equipment, the chef who cooked our meals, and his assistant. We crashed in our tents for a short while and then met at the dinner tent quite starved from each full day of hiking.

Spending the last thirty years working in kitchens, I was most intrigued by the mobile kitchen these guys set up in a tent at every stop. The Peruvian cuisine was beyond delicious. I was the only tourist in our group who kept peeking over at the chef and his assistant preparing this amazing food in a *campsite*. The absolute *best* part of each night's dinner, however, was not even the food. Our traveling kitchen crew always had a small hand-held radio in the dinner

tent. Sometimes they were struggling to get in any radio station, since each night we were nestled in some deep valley. That little radio with its tiny, high-pitched speaker was the only music I heard for four days.

During the first night's dinner, that radio played some relatively modern pop music sung in Spanish. There were a few American pop hits from the '80s sprinkled into the song list, but the Peruvian modern pop itself was mildly interesting. It was our second or third night's dinner music that really mesmerized me. Some of it was very lively folk rock of sorts—lots of hollering and accordion—almost like a Peruvian Pogues. The other hikers were all carrying on their conversations, but I was *glued* to that radio. This stuff sounded *great*! Then, a few songs later, the singing turned to screaming. The instruments sounded more rock and less folk. That was the point in time that will be forever frozen in my mind. There I was, in a tent on the Inca Trail in the high-altitude jungle of Peru, listening to what I could only guess was this totally intense, screaming Peruvian crust-core. The entire experience hit me like a ton of bricks, like a giant rolling boulder. It was totally unexpected. It was totally memorable. I just sat there speechless, listening.

A day or two later, we were walking amongst the ruins of Machu Picchu having our pictures taken with llamas and alpacas. We hiked the additional climb up Huayna Picchu, that steep mountain just next to the site. On that climb I learned of my newfound fear of extreme heights. Legs shaking and heart pounding, I clawed my way up and down.

Mrs. Hen and I survived the full four days of hiking and continued to explore other areas of the Sacred Valley before we bussed down to Lake Titicaca for a few days. For two weeks we took in the most amazing scenery I could ever imagine. We climbed to heights I'd never thought I'd see. In my mind, however, I simply cannot escape that brief moment in the jungle of the Andes Mountains when my ears were blindsided by screaming Peruvian, folk-tinged crust-core. I wasn't searching for the obscure punk, but it sure found me.

**Dinghole Report #172: Late-Night
Ice Storm Festival Hurlers!**
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #735)

Time had come, yet again, for my annual soup shop punk show! In recent



KAT WANISH

I simply cannot escape that brief moment in the jungle of the Andes Mountains when my ears were blindsided by screaming Peruvian, folk-tinged crust-core. I wasn't searching for the obscure punk, but it sure found me.

years it had become known as Ephraim City Limits, the world's *only* two-hour music festival. Every year I get Milwaukee's hardcore goofballs Holy Shit! to drive up and rip Ephraim's ear drums out. They never fail at this task. This year's opening band was a real clown car of ancient pop punk weirdness. The Ephraim Green Shod Cowboys (a thinly veiled Boris The Sprinkler) came up from Green Bay to play their sixteen *new songs* (that's where the weirdness comes in). Rev. Nørb fell backwards off the soup counter onto their drumset for maximum chaotic effect! Holy Shit! raged through the best set I'd ever seen them play. These guys have been around

for almost twenty years, and somehow they *keep* getting better!

This year's ECL was the first ever to find itself in the middle of a full-blown ice storm. The entire county was glistening with ever-accumulating freezing rain and ice. This made many of the twenty-five festival-goers head straight home after the two-hour punk rock festival. When the post-festival Abba dance party finally began in my kitchen, there were only about ten of us left. We weren't driving, and we had a lot of extra alcohol. About one hour into the non-stop Abba dancing action, Andy Junk reminded me that the Rhythm Chicken still had to play. I tried backing out, but the few remaining folks held me to task.

After removing my shirt and climbing behind Eric's drumset, I pulled on the dirtiest chickenhead in punk rock. I attempted to drum. It was *not* pretty. The punk rock ice storm refugees didn't seem to mind! I then copied Nørb's newest move and fell onto the drumset, the very one I was attempting to play. That probably sounded better than my actual drumming!

Three weeks later I was in the jungle listening to Peruvian folk-tinged crust-core.

—Rhythm Chicken



Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column

Chris Boarts Larson, slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce



Some of the most memorable shows are outdoor shows. Empty lots, street corners, backyards, city parks, under bridges, on top of bridges... it's the best of summer! Richmond has a great spot under a bridge right next to the river. In May there was an awesome generator show with a solid line up of d-beat, crust punk, and fireworks.

Physique from Olympia, Wash. channeled the NW Atrocious Madness d-beat style; ScumRaid from Seoul, Korea tore things up with a fury and pummeling drums; and Syringe from Baltimore delivered classic '90s style dual-vocalled crust punk to perfection. Richmond's Future Terror (not pictured) perfectly rounded out the show.

—Chris Boarts Larson

scumraid.bandcamp.com
physique.bandcamp.com
syringe410.bandcamp.com
futureterror.bandcamp.com



ScumRaid, Physique, and Syringe—RVA May 4, 2019

Goodbye, Things.

Jamaica Dyer

I tried to be A MINIMALIST

throwing everything away

YET

I still have piles

and piles

of stuff

I leave out

just what we need

for a week

and I pretend

the boxes don't exist

Last morning here

and

Everything we own

is on the street outside

-JAM
DYER
2019

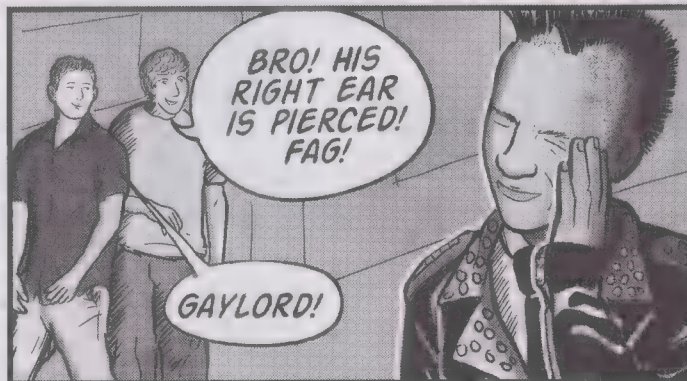
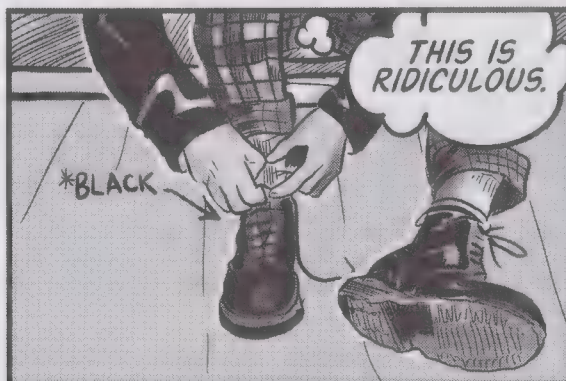
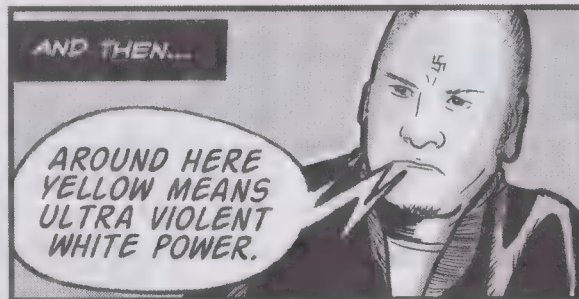
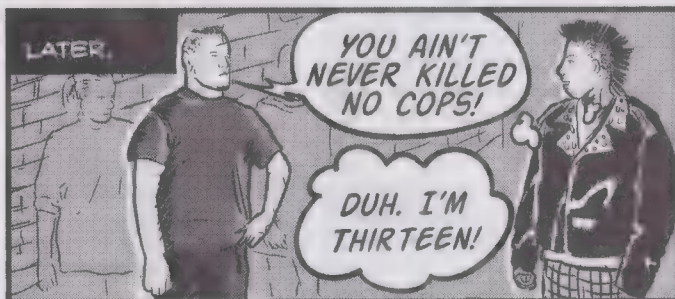
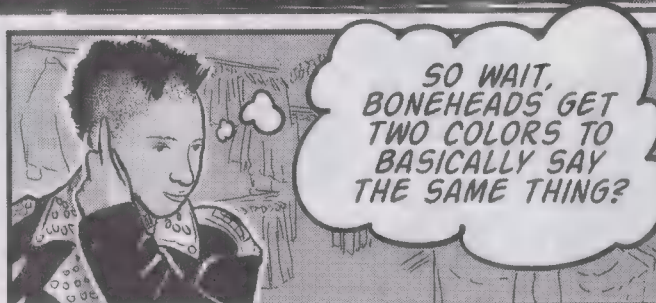
JAMES SPOONER'S

NO FUN



1990 - I GOT MY FIRST PAIR OF DOC MARTENS.

ACCORDING TO UNWRITTEN RULES
PREDATING MY TIME IN THE SCENE
THERE IS A LOT OF VALUE PLACED
ON ONE'S SHOE LACES.
RED = NAZI, WHITE = WHITE POWER.



@SPOONERSNOFUN



one punk's guide to: THE DARK AGES

Written by
BILUPS ANEN
layouts by:
TODD TAYLOR
illumination:
SHANE MUNER



You can fall at the first hurdle discussing "The Dark Ages" with historians and/or "historians." A lot of people contest the nickname given to a period between August 24, 410 C.E. and the time leading up to around 800 C.E. when people across Europe were not prospering. Much like the term "new wave," serious people will not acknowledge your discussion of "The Dark Ages" without trying to convince you not to use the term. It's hard to ignore the period of roughly four hundred years after the fall of the Western Roman Empire when very little progress was made in science and literature. People struggled year-round just to feed themselves. If you weren't royalty or one of the very few who had money, raw survival was your main concern. People without money barely ate. Reading was monk's business; few people of upper or lower stations saw any reason to learn. There was a general lack of food and community. There were few leaders or organized governments to which to turn for help. Disease was also around every corner.

For those living in this era, you waited for improvements in your situation that were never going to arrive. Things didn't change much in your lifetime. People lived hard, short lives in seclusion. This led to a certain amount of naiveté. As suggested in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975 C.E.), you were liable to believe anything anyone with a clean shirt on had to say. If starvation or disease didn't get you, you were also under threat of being in the path of roaming bands of barbarians unconcerned with your problems. You were a sitting duck as a farmer and reliant on robbing if you were a soldier. Dangerous bands of marauders informed you of their presence by stopping in and killing you on their way through town. Europe was in a state of nearly constant war. Groups like the Visigoths, the Vandals, the Saxons and others whose legacy would go on to inspire cool band names were almost always on the hunt for a community to trounce or at war with each other. The Vandals, for example, were an Eastern Germanic tribe occupying much of what is now Poland. The Visigoths, major players in our story, were more at play in the West. If you were organized at all, you were eventually going to war with other Europeans. The low population meant you could only organize so much in your own defense.

Thousands of years of Roman progress became relatively useless. Much like you still can today, you could go back to Rome and examine the remnants of society: the roads and monuments and aqueducts and statues. But at the time it didn't mean much; you had little context to understand why they were now essentially outdated. There weren't enough people to maintain lines of communication. People were isolated. Without anything at all to serve as a center of thinking, villagers believed strange things about the world around them.

This piece is meant to introduce some key names and events, and how they seeped past a major block of time, only to return Europe back to a position where there was enough time and energy among the citizenry to ruminate on anything beyond surviving. So if you're at a party and someone contests your clever timeline regarding the Dark Ages, just remember if they've read more on the subject, they have less to do than you do.

The Term Itself

The term Dark Ages is largely credited to Francisco Petrarch. Petrarch was a fourteenth century poet and scholar. Inventing the sonnet was among his most recognizable achievements. Petrarch is known as the "father of humanism," a concept prevalent to driving the renaissance during his lifetime. His writings shaped much of how we view The Renaissance. Petrarch coined the label "Dark Ages." Much like Elvis's comeback special, it wasn't called the "comeback special" until Elvis actually came back. The Dark Ages was given the moniker from the comfy chair of the Renaissance.

Petrarch has been criticized for being enamored with his own moment and perhaps a little enamored with himself—in such a way that for him to call a previous era "The Dark Ages" should be regarded as an act of hubris. But we also wouldn't know much about the era without

his work. One of his long-time projects was to translate the previous thousand years of writing to cement the history of Europe during the interim between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance beginning around 1300 C.E.

A-VERY-nother State of Mind

Youth Brigade carried their own punk philosophy across North America and assimilated with different punk scenes in the film *Another State of Mind* (1984). Imagine inching across Asia in a wooden cart with little knowledge of the world around you, traveling along China's Silk Road. Although evidence suggests even earlier trade on and near this route, China's Han Dynasty in early 200 C.E. is often a focal period suggesting the route had a serious effect on worldwide trade and consequently worldwide culture. From early 200 C.E. up to the point of the fall of the Roman Empire, cultural interaction can be documented outside of Roman providences on a large scale. Silk and spice were the main products, but political and religious viewpoints were also cross-pollinated with existing Korean, Japanese, Islamic, and Indian cultures.

What did many of these cultures have in common? Generally a sort of "might equals right" reality forced upon them by circumstance. Chinese dynasties changed as often as the power to overthrow one family came to another family. Islamic-controlled provinces occasionally resembled democracy, but the autonomous faith allowed individuals to make up their minds as to who would be in power. This struggle was often settled in battles between charismatic individuals, as opposed to philosophical debate. The biggest and strongest families often controlled Asia and North Africa. Caesar-esque squabbles among those families in power led to murder and corruption similar to Rome's families. These are the tropes of much art and literature; arguably the most basic animal instincts mixing with growing diabolical intellect.

Outside of Rome, the concept of democracy was forming, but it was not a fully instinctive concept and it would take the world years to even put up a semblance of such a system of government. Even in modern times, you have to watch your ass. In the early years of motorcycle gangs, bikers could descend on a small town and wreak havoc, knowing a small-town sheriff's office couldn't handle the onslaught. The ability of a group's welfare being tied to its ability to enforce its will was very much a worldwide reality. In 200 C.E. there was simply nowhere for anyone to turn if a group bigger and stronger than yours felt they were more correct than you. If they wanted your stuff, your only choice was to roll the dice. The Roman Empire is largely thought to be one of the biggest and most organized societies of the time. But that never stopped its leaders from dying of unnatural causes.

So What Happened in Rome?

You might have raised an eyebrow earlier when The Dark Ages were cited as beginning on August 24, 410 C.E. How is the period traced to such a specific date? Of course there are a number of political and weather-related factors leading to the era known as The Dark Ages, but this specific August date marks the day Roman leaders were forced to open their doors to a mercenary named Alaric, a man who would become King Alaric I: the first King of the Visigoths. Alaric was at one time an employee of the realm who was fed up of poor treatment.

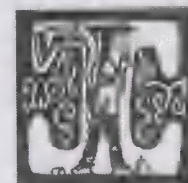
During the final years of The Roman Empire, the Romans slowly grew to rely on outside help for security. Hundreds of years of erosion of sensible Roman leadership caused the armies to be supplemented by bands of mercenaries. The Visigoths, or Goths as they were also known, were a group of united Germanic tribes from Western Europe, brought together largely by their enslavement by the Romans. These were roaming tribes: communities of people who survived by staying on the road and fighting when they had to. Rather than go to war with some of the tribes, The Romans hired some of them for security. If being a Roman citizen in the Roman regular army was hard living, being a mercenary-for-hire was much worse.

Among a long list of examples of what little regard the Romans had for their employees, they would trade starving Goths rotten meat for their children, effectively entering them into slavery. It wasn't long before Alaric came to the realization: he could fight for rotten meat and a



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pittance, or just turn his sword around and unite his people. Alaric went to battle with the Romans, eventually cutting off all roads allowing trade outside the city's walls. He starved the Romans out over a period of two years until they had no choice to let him in. The Romans had even turned to cannibalism before finally opening the gates on August 24, 410 C.E. The Visigoths took everything they could carry, but there was very little food left. The Dark Ages was tougher than its most famous characters. Alaric died later that year of a fever. The exact cause is lost to history, but his sacking of Rome was the ripple in time that would begin a long period of struggle.

People Moved to the Suburbs

After the fall of the empire, the most sensible hope of survival lay in relocating to areas around Rome: places where farming was better. The means and need to gather in cities to accommodate trade and share information dropped severely. This trend dissolved communities and forced people to be self-sufficient. Romanesque albums were tucked far away in closets. People were less concerned with their homes being impressive and focused on protecting the family. Many homes were simply built: one- and two-room structures often built from brick stolen right from ruins left by the Romans. Famous Roman structures were torn apart for building materials. It must have been strange to look around and see the remains of some of the grand structures of Rome and realize something of that magnitude put there to serve the citizenry was then a distant memory as the people who built it. A time could have arrived when people tearing the Coliseum apart for bricks might not have even known entirely what the building was for in the first place, or what went on there, relying only on word of mouth for historical references about a rich society that existed before them.

Clovis I

Christianity was gaining favor across Europe after it was made legal in 312 C.E. by Emperor Constantine. But Christianity was largely a fad up to this point. Large gangs of roaming groups often led by worshippers of polytheistic figures were in charge over much of Europe.

The Franks were Germanic tribes covering southern Europe and some of the first to get their act together in terms of forming successful settlements. Clovis was a barbarian king of a Frankish tribe, ruling much over a large swath of what is now France. He was one of the first kings to convert to Christianity and his popularity united many Frankish tribes. But Christianity was largely just a political handle to Clovis. He was not opposed to killing those around him to get power. He was smart enough to see the selling points of Christianity by convincing a lot of people a single "God" was on his side. People had little to go on during this time. This type of naiveté made Christianity a major tool for scaring people into doing things. The idea of a nicer afterlife was appealing. Clovis converted to Christianity in 496 C.E. and gained further acclaim by stopping the Visigoths, defeating Alaric II with his newly Christian-ed warriors. Clovis was baptized in 508 C.E. His newfound religion didn't stop him from killing many candidates for his job, as was the practice. But the unification under a monotheistic King was appealing to millions of people who were unable to attach themselves to a regular community or belief system. Much like how the internet has united punk rockers around the world, small bands of people with little communication were starting to have a mappable and united way of life.

Justinian

While Clovis's efforts to unite what would become the French were having their effect on land settlement, the Eastern shores of The Roman Empire were still under the leadership of what was left of Rome. Alaric's attacks all but destroyed the Western empire: the half of the empire most often portrayed by Shakespeare and the media. The Eastern shores of the Roman Empire controlling Greece, Turkey, and Egypt were somewhat unaffected by the events defining the classic concept of The Fall of the Roman Empire. Trade ruled the eastern shores and through continued efforts to run the East as business as usual, a leader in the East rose to greater power. Justinian I (482-565 C.E.) had the wild ambition to

reunite the East and Western branches of The Empire and rule over one large Roman Empire.

Justinian the First's (also known as Justinian the Great) concerns were largely financial. He was heinously corrupt and a pathological liar. Donald Trump's techniques for governing would have allowed him to flourish during this time. Justinian would alter and forge wills. He would withhold pay from his troops and say they donated their wages to honor their leader. (As of this writing, we are currently in a government shutdown in the United States.) Justinian lied and cheated to the point where the citizenry could see through his tactics.

The citizenry had had enough by 532 C.E. Tens of thousands of citizens of Constantinople were killed during the Nika Riots, one of the most violent riots in history. After a week of uncontrollable fighting and damage to the city, Justinian and his wife Theodora were nearly run out of town. Theodora stopped dramatically halfway down the dock on the way to a ship charged with getting them out of town. She said she wasn't ready to be a civilian and would rather die a queen. She is said to have proclaimed: "Royalty is a fine burial shroud," and somehow Justinian's men were eventually able to overpower their pursuers.

The Nika Riots left nearly 30,000 citizens dead and led to many senatorial executions. Besides the deaths claimed by the riot, Justinian himself put up large numbers cleaning house. He killed all of his advisors. He was able to resurrect control and eventually march west—hoping to unite Rome once again—creating a unified empire. By 542 C.E. he had as strong of a hold on Europe as anyone since Alaric sacked the Western region. But amid these dreams of uniting the Roman Empire stalked a problem no one saw coming.

The Bubonic Plague

As trade flourished in the East, stowaway rats carrying the bubonic plague traveled to populated areas along trade lines and on to where goods were shipped. Fever. Chills. Hallucinations. Sensitivity to light. Tumors and muscle spasms. In three days you were likely to experience intense groin pain. Flashes of some of the worst grindcore album covers you've ever seen can't prepare you for death by the bubonic plague. One hundred million people were killed across Europe. That's approximately the same amount of people who died fighting in World War One and World War Two combined. Your chances of survival were minimal. Even Justinian got the plague. But Justinian was among the small percentage of those who survived the disease. It kept a lid on the final attempts to make Rome relevant for a while. Western Europe continued to fall under control of whoever was nearby and had an army.

The loss of nearly half of Europe's population to the plague hindered every effort towards unification. The plague also showed its head in the sixth and seventh centuries, keeping the European population low and causing a natural barrier for settlement. Justinian lived a long life, but the plague ravaged his brain. He became paranoid and rode his constituents into a consistently weakened state. After his death, the last vestiges of Rome were relegated to the annals of history. The Franks were becoming the largest organized group, but there were many other Germanic tribes keen to keep Europe in turmoil for hundreds of years.

North Africa

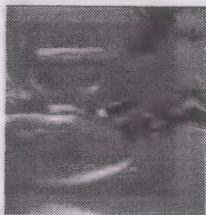
Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi was a Moorish leader recognizing Europe's deterioration. Many North African communities were united under Islam, but did not have the high numbers of armies to compete with Rome. Leaders like Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi were flourishing in their ability to acquire and settle land with Rome out of the way.

Europe came across as easy prey to Ghafiqi and his North African armies. Fifty thousand men tore through France, making quick work of the small tribes of unorganized Franks. Rahman finally presented a formidable enemy to the loosely knit bands of Frankish tribes. The Moors were successful until the rise of a European leader named Charles "The Hammer" Martel. By 732 C.E., the direction of the conflict between Franks and Moors changed drastically. Martel traveled around to farming communities and small towns. He convinced the Franks to get organized, become soldiers, and fight an organized battle against the Moors.



Flashes of some of the worst grindcore album covers you've ever seen can't prepare you for death by the Bubonic Plague.

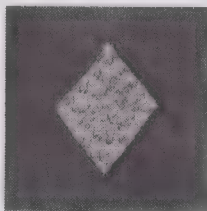




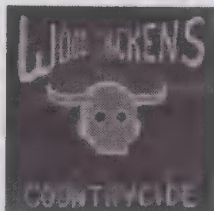
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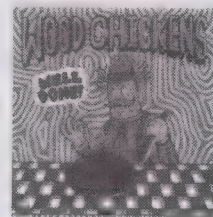
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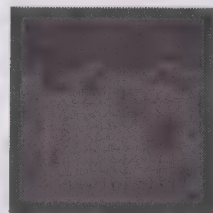
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Ghaffiqi was killed in battle and Martel gained the reputation and the spoils of the Moors' campaign. Charles "The Hammer" Martel became ■ rock star. He was one of those Dark Ages personalities whose story was shared across sprawling and empty Europe. His name would help one of his descendents become one of the biggest personalities of the era.

Charlemagne

Charlemagne was the grandson of Charles "The Hammer" Martel. Charlemagne is known as "the father of Europe"—was the first person to be crowned "Emperor of the Romans" on December 25, 800 C.E.—and became the first person to hold the title since the fall of the Roman Empire. This was effectively the beginning of The Holy Roman Empire: the biggest resurgence of Roman rule and an era informally marking the reform linking The Dark Ages and The Renaissance.

Charlemagne was ruthless in his pursuit of the crown. His younger brother Carloman I was in charge of half of the kingdom after their father's death. Carloman I died mysteriously, leaving Charlemagne head of the entire kingdom. No one directly knows the cause of Carloman's death, but Charlemagne became known for killing relations indiscriminately to secure lands and titles for himself. As a twenty-four-year-old landowner, he held the largest land unification in Europe since the Western empire. Charlemagne defeated a troublesome Germanic tribe occupying the region of the North Sea called The Saxons. In 782 C.E. 4,500 Saxons were killed during The Bloody Verdict of Verden: an event exemplifying the ruthlessness of his campaigns.

But Charlemagne was also beloved by many of his constituents for reasons other than force. He favored education, built schools, and learned to read during a time when reading was considered monk work, not warrior work. He supported programs creating options for his constituents. His delving into Christianity didn't stop him from being a swinger. Charlemagne had five girlfriends and five wives in the court, his undocumented lovers thought to be in the hundreds. Charlemagne became the biggest star of The Dark Ages, dying in 814 C.E. and leaving his ample legacy to a son who was not disputed—since Charlemagne eliminated a lot of his family.

June 8, 793 C.E.

A group shaping the later segment of The Dark Ages and continuing to pose ■ threat between Europe and North Africa until the fourteenth century would make themselves known to Europe on June 8, 793 C.E. On the island of Lindisfarne, just south of the Scottish border, monks looking towards the sea saw strange, low-floating boats appear on the horizon. Once on the shore, these Norwegian sailors ran ashore killing everyone in sight and taking their things. They were not concerned with the changes Charlemagne's policies were having. They were the notorious Vikings, and from that moment they made themselves known across Europe for about five hundred years.

If It's Not One Thing, It's Another

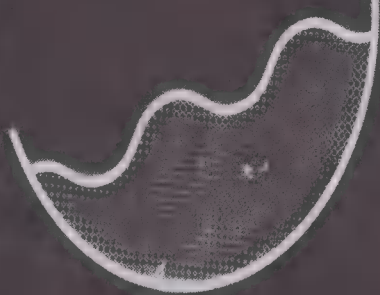
One of the great Dark Age paradoxes comes in the form of irony so strong it sounds like ■ joke. Once Vikings took to settling and became part of the landscape of Europe, many knights paid to defend recently united European interests were now over-trained, battle tested, and out of work. Knights trained to protect and serve often became thugs. They either banded together in unstoppable gangs or worked as mercenaries for the rich to bully excessive taxes out of their constituents. Or they just made a nuisance of themselves at a Hollywood show by dancing too hard. But as The Crusades created a united Europe, knights began to find jobs in their fields. Weather changes allowed for better farming and surpluses to be traded. Through trade, education and free time slowly seeped into the skeletal makeup of the European lifestyle. Things were still rough. It was not instantaneous, but over the next five hundred years or so, people formed stronger communities and defined cultural borders. Slow advances paved the way for the Renaissance and by around 1300 C.E., people like Petrarch would be allotted the free time to reflect on history and how it led to him.



Knights trained to protect and serve often became thugs.



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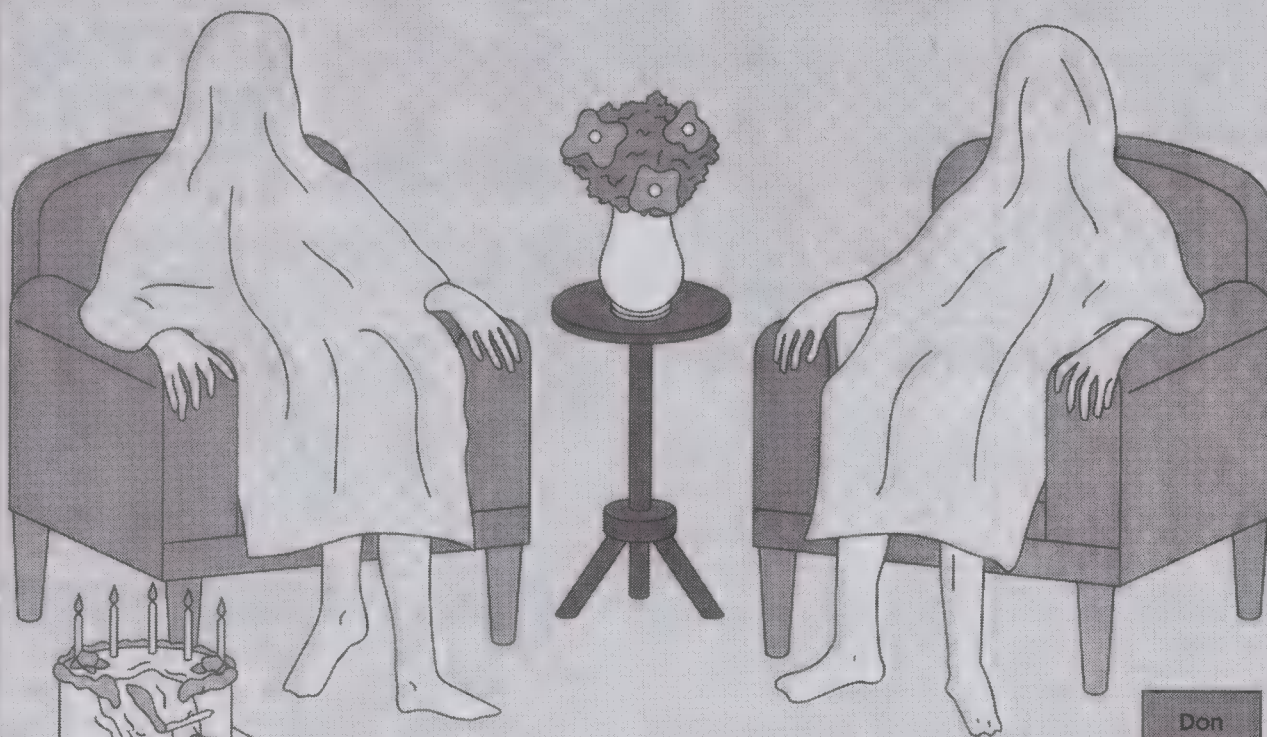


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So How Do We Know a Lot of This?

In 731 C.E. a monk named Venerable Bede completed *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. His writing covered the time from 55 B.C.E. to 731 C.E. and included events and ideas from books he protected from being destroyed for contradicting Catholicism. His library of 250 books was one of the largest of its kind at the time. So remember Bede when you curse having to move boxes of records, demos, back issues of zines, or bootleg DVDs of Don Letts and Penelope Spheeris documentaries.

The Dark Ages was a bleak era for Europe. From the peasants staring out the front door waiting for the weather to change enough to farm, to monks patiently transcribing words on the off chance it would matter to someone down the line, to victims of Viking violence—it was a dreary time. Yet this small microcosm of events and characters exemplify attitudes toward life and government still visible in the psyche of modern society. Humanity really had to push back with little hope of bettering their situation. The world becomes a smaller place when you realize hundreds of years can pass without much changing in the average person's everyday life.

Julius Caesar pretended the republic was safe until the opportunity to declare himself “dictator for life” arose. Today, much like Rome, we have dictators posing as leaders of a republic. Rome struggled with this problem so many times the republic eventually disintegrated into anarchy. Politicians argued so much about how to treat their mercenaries, it never occurred to them their own employees would seize the opportunity to take over. What would it be like if that was the next step for America? We think we're immune, but we have a president currently trying to circumvent Congress—to evade checks and balances put into place for our protection. It's not impossible to imagine America hiding reality behind piles and piles of academic arguments.

There may have been people during the Dark Ages who could only theorize on what the aqueducts were used for while pulling bricks from The Coliseum to build makeshift homes. A friend of mine recently asked what his iPod was. Can you imagine your great great grandchild writing a paper on what they think a computer café was? We're used to technology changing quickly. So used to it, the damage it does can sometimes not be obvious. Does having technology and an understanding of history make a difference? Compare the Dark Ages' lack of information to the deluge of data of the modern age where all of our information is logged, from where we travel to what shoes we buy. Is history just data and society's preferred interpretation of it? We're slaves to massive, invasive, and intangible things: distractions of the modern age cloaked as important life decisions. Too much information can over saturate as easily as much as lack of information can deplete.

We believe we're free to choose, but we are only as free as our choices. How important would our cell phones be if they all went dead? Is it impossible? There may have been Roman citizens who believed the aqueducts would always be available to them. It's hard to say if Europeans progressed beyond the era because of or in spite of these hardships. Does studying The Dark Ages mean we can avoid it? We think we're past regressing as a society, but it's possible the Romans felt similarly on August 24, 410 C.E.

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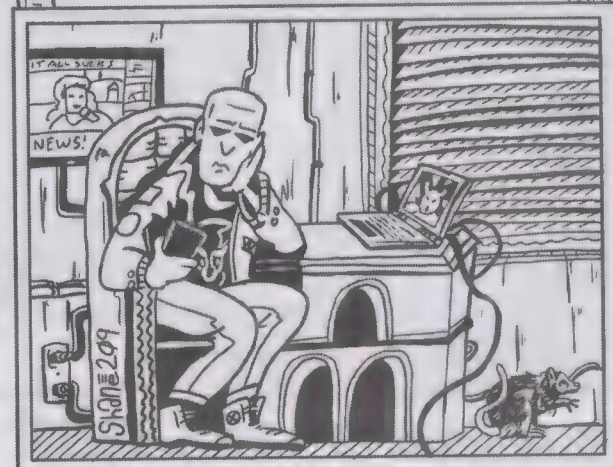
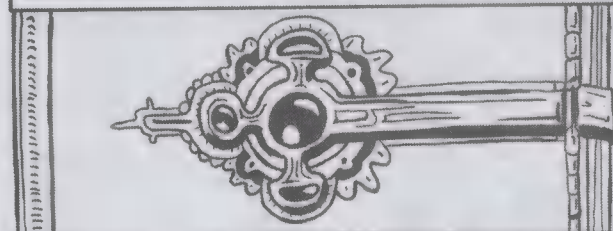
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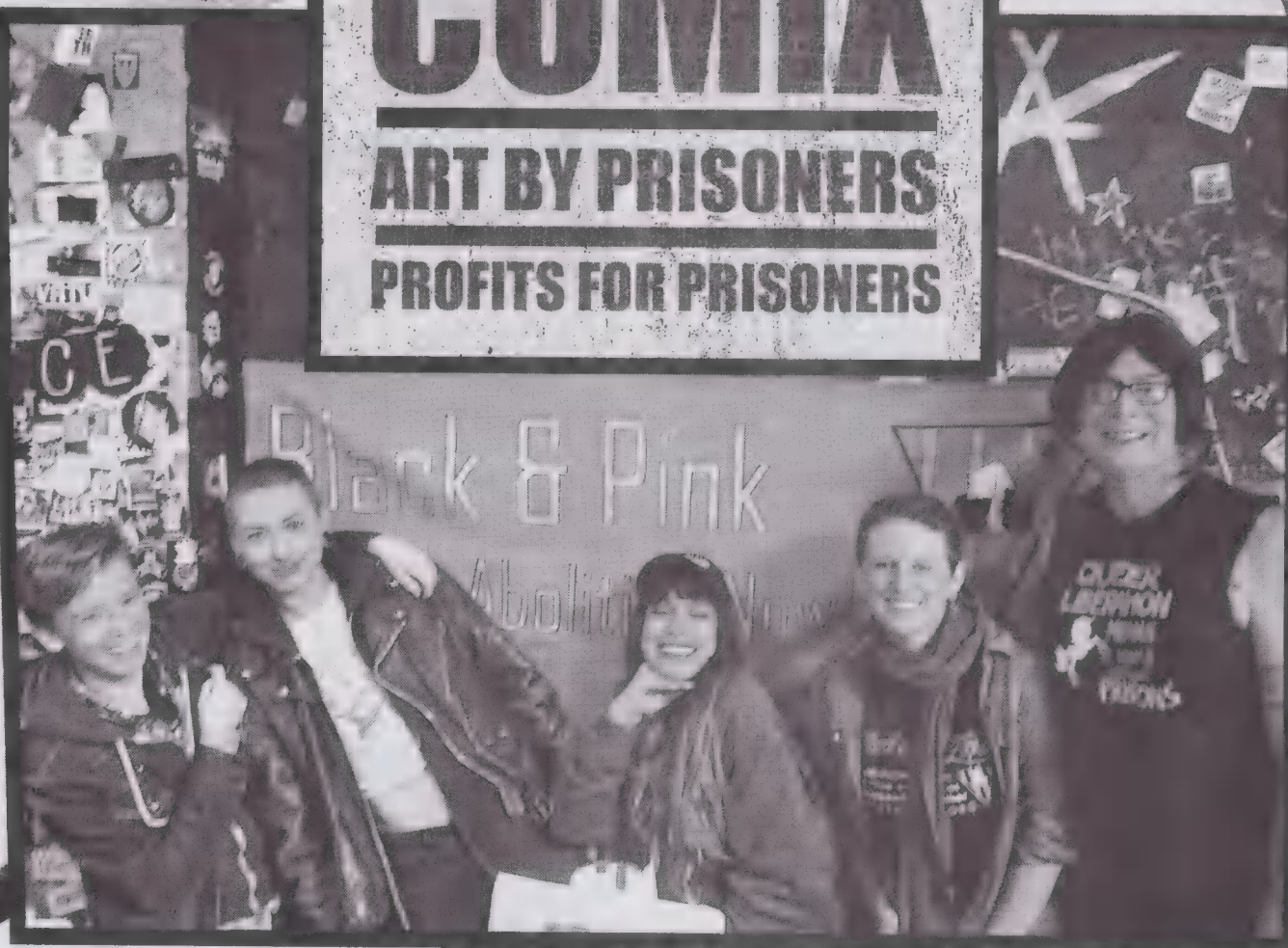
Too much information can
oversaturate as easily as
lack of information can deplete.



ABO COMIX

ART BY PRISONERS

PROFITS FOR PRISONERS



AN INTERVIEW WITH **ABO COMIX CO-FOUNDER CASPER CENDRE**

BY **ROSIE GONCE** AND **JON MULE**

INTRODUCTION BY **JON MULE**

PHOTOS BY **ROSIE GONCE** AND CARE OF **ABO COMIX**

LAYOUT BY **DYLAN DAVIS**

Prisons are not only designed to keep prisoners inside. The walls topped with razor wire and armed guards also keep those of us on the outside from looking in. The prison system is isolated by more than just physical barriers. Those are too easily overcome. There are also walls built into the ways we talk about justice and policing. More walls are erected in jokes told about the suffering that goes on in prison cells, never funny to those experiencing the pain and shame. There are also barriers in the way law and order is presented on television and in movies and in the cynical speeches politicians offer in response to tragedy. We start building these walls early in the stories we tell our children about work, education, poverty, and human difference. All of these products of American culture, puritanical religion, and the Western caste system work to ensure the twenty-two percent of the world's prisoners—living within the United States—be gone and forgotten as they provide cheap labor for multi-billion-dollar corporations.

I first came across ABO (short for *abolish*) Comix for a grad school project as I researched organizations working against this complex and ruthless system. Co-founder Casper Cendre and a small group of volunteers based in Oakland, Calif. publish comix by queer prisoners with the hope their stories are heard and not be forgotten. Rosie and I left the interview with a handful of letters from people inside prison thanking ABO for allowing their stories to be told, sharing community and friendship, and for shining a light in the dark.

Jon Mule: ABO has three very specific overlapping focuses: comics, by queer artists, who are incarcerated. Can you give us a sense of how these three things came to overlap either for you personally or the group that calls itself ABO?

Casper Cendre: Sure, it was kind of a happy accident honestly. It was myself, Io, and this person who is no longer involved named Woof. We just met up one day in a community garden and we were having a chat about our creative projects and such. Io has been doing DIY, punk-inspired zines and comic book making for a really long time. I had been doing prisoner advocacy and prison abolition work for about ten years. We had been talking about these subjects and we thought it might be a cool idea to bridge those things. I had a lot of contacts inside prison. I had a lot of pen pals who were super artistic.

So we reached out to them first and asked if they might be interested in helping us put together a comic book anthology about their experiences on the inside, and they were really interested in it. We actually took out an advertisement calling for submissions in the *Black and Pink* newspaper. *Black and Pink* is an abolitionist organization that helps connect free world people with incarcerated pen pals. They have a newsletter that goes to thousands of LGBT people on the inside. We crafted a poster calling for submissions and sent it out in the newsletter, and got this overwhelmingly positive response. Hundreds of people wrote in to us and wanted to submit comics. It just kind of exploded from there.

Jon: So you were already getting comics from people before this was a thing?

Casper: I was getting art. Not specifically comics, but a lot of various prison art. Like, there's that one right there [points to drawing of David Bowie on the wall]. Bowie—that was one from one of my pen pals. I've got probably like, sixty art boards or something, kind of in that style, from various people. Once we took out the call for submissions, my P.O. Box was just flooded. I had to pick up mail every single day, or else I'd get these really passive aggressive post-it notes from the postal workers.

Rosie Gonce: And you sell the artwork as well, when you table events?

Casper: Yeah.

Rosie: And there's some artwork in the anthologies as well.

Casper: Yeah and I'm hoping to put more up in the store on ABO's website (abocomix.com) this year because our entire model is to help get funds for incarcerated artists. We do have some art up in the store right now, but not all of it by any means.

Jon: People who are incarcerated versus people in the "free world"—that's a common term you use?

Casper: Yes. I think that's a common term in the abolitionist community.

Jon: How big is ABO inside and out?

Casper: Outside, we're super small. It's just myself, Io in Philadelphia, and I just brought on two more volunteers named Niko and Rio. But our capacity is limited because I work full-time. Everyone else works, too. So, we're very small. But inside, we're much larger. I'd say we write with probably over 150 people now, pretty regularly, and new people are always writing in.

Jon: *Razorcake* is about DIY, or do-it-yourself punk, and some of the DIY techniques to create art inside prison are so unbelievable to me. I'm thinking specifically of what people go through to get materials. Is that because they're just not given any resources and they have to come up with everything on their own?

Casper: Pretty much, yeah. Art supplies inside prison can be really expensive if they're even accessible at all. It generally differs from prison to prison and state to state what people even can access. But if somebody doesn't have access to funds or a craft shop, they have to get really creative to be able to create something. So a lot of the art we receive is just drawn on printer or lined paper with pen or pencil. But even then, it can be really difficult for people because a lot of prisons don't allow pencils like how we're used to them. They're bendy and they're really hard to hold so they can't be turned into weapons. Some prisons don't allow access to pens. It can get really hard to create art for some folks. We actually have an entire zine about the creativity that goes into making a lot of the art inside prison. It's by one of our contributors named E.L. Tedana.

Jon: I remember one of the cartoons in the anthology was someone talking about their "station" or their "office" and literally lifting the mattress and then sitting legs under the bed and that's their desk, right?

Casper: I think that's by E.L. Tedana.

Jon: Another connection I see between *Razorcake* and ABO is that there's this community that's built beyond the final product. People like to have the hard copy of the anthology or the zines, but it's so much

more than that, right—this going back and forth between you and the artists themselves. So in the letter-writing, are you also building connections with families outside?

Casper: In some cases, yeah. Some people ask us to connect with their family members, just to either ease the communication process or to send funds to their family members. We send out quarterly donations to all of our contributors, but some people opted to have that sent directly to their family instead. Definitely it's been so much more than just curating art submissions from people; it's been connecting and building friendships.

Most of the people I write with now have been writing for the last two years and we've written... I don't even know, honestly, how many letters we've sent back and forth, but it's hundreds. I write pretty regularly with each person the best that I can. I've gotten to know all the intricate details of their life on the inside and the things they go through. I actually printed out some of the letters we've gotten in the last month [points to stack of letters on coffee table]. It's amazing just hearing what everyone in there is going through, what they overcome, and the life they build inside prison.

Jon: In regards to what people go through in prison, I realized as I was reading that it's ■ strange time because some of the things you talk about are very much a part of the public conversation and pop culture in 2019, whether it be *Orange Is the New Black* or Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th*. On the other side there's "rainbow capitalism" (companies that have previously ignored the LGBT movement now incorporating queer characters and stories into their advertising campaigns) blowing up, but leaving a lot of the deeper concerns that ABO addresses off the table. For example, ■ lot of people may celebrate "rainbow capitalism" but not have any clue that twenty-eight states still don't have protections for queer people in the workplace, right? I'm wondering how you view those cultural shifts and the things that our society chooses to reflect and not reflect?

Casper: That's difficult, because as a queer and trans person, I obviously want to celebrate any steps we take towards being recognized, basically, as people. So it's easy to fall in that trap of celebrating "rainbow capitalism" and seeing major brands like Target celebrating that stuff. It's kind of exciting on an intrinsic level because you're kind of like, "Yay, my identity is actually ■ thing that is being recognized," but then at the same time, so much of the really profound things about being queer are so overlooked.

A lot of the things are really hard; like our community is subject to very high rates of incarceration. That's something that's not generally talked a lot about. And then the things that queer people are subjected to in prison, it's just—we saw a little bit of that with *Orange Is the New Black* and such, but at the end of the day that's ■ fictional representation of what prison is like. Not generally the real thing. And it's something that I keep learning about, even though I've been writing with people for about ten years.

The other day I just learned what a "Cold Room" is in prison. I had never heard that term before and that really shocked me because I thought I knew a whole lot about prisons. And that's ■ thing where, at least in Texas, if somebody says that they are feeling sad or depressed or anything like that they will strip ■ person completely naked, take away everything that they have, put them in a room that is extremely cold, and they will keep them in there with nothing else. It's basically just a concrete room that's like thirty degrees—I could be wrong about the temperature—until they say they're no longer feeling sad and depressed.

So they basically torture this person until they don't have to file paperwork, or something like that, or send them to medical. A person doesn't even have to say they're depressed. A guard can say something like, "You're at risk for suicide so we're going to do this." And that's not really uncommon in prison. When I was talking to my pen pal on the phone, they brought that up as just a completely ordinary occurrence that didn't even faze them at that point.

And when I went to visit one of my pen pals who is a trans woman in ■ men's facility, we had an hour visit and it was through glass. She's not eligible for contact visits—she's basically not eligible because she's a trans woman. The rule is that I could've snuck her something during the visit, despite the fact that we were between three inches of solid glass. So she was strip searched and cavity searched by a male guard just to be able to use the facility. That's just a normal aspect of her everyday life in prison, just like the assaults on people's humanity that we don't even think about. It's just really heartbreaking that people go through this every day and we don't even know what it's like.

Jon: And it seems like most people find those, as you said, "assaults on humanity" justifiable because this is a prison. "That's what happens, you did something wrong, you're there."

Casper: Right.

Jon: And so that leads me to the zine whose title I loved before it even arrived in the mail: *How to Talk to Wrestling Fans about Prison Abolition*.

Casper: [laughs]

Jon: It was great to read, but I imagine you have people who get right up close to ABO Comix, they're engaged, and they want to participate. Then they hear "prison abolition," and that throws them off? Is that a thing that happens? And, if so, what do you talk to those people about?

Casper: Definitely. I know that it's a difficult concept to wrap your brain around. In my early twenties, I was all for prison reform. But then I started writing with people in prison and actually understanding what really happens and what people go through. That steered me down the road of abolition. I came to that conclusion because prison reform tactics generally do nothing to address root problems. They don't address what we think of crime, like where those issues come

from. They don't address issues of poverty or inequality or drug use or anything like that. They just address what's happening in prison and making things a little bit better than what they are now. It might help in the short run getting a few people out of prison right now, like ■ few small-time drug users, but it's not really addressing any of the issues of why people commit things that we consider crime.

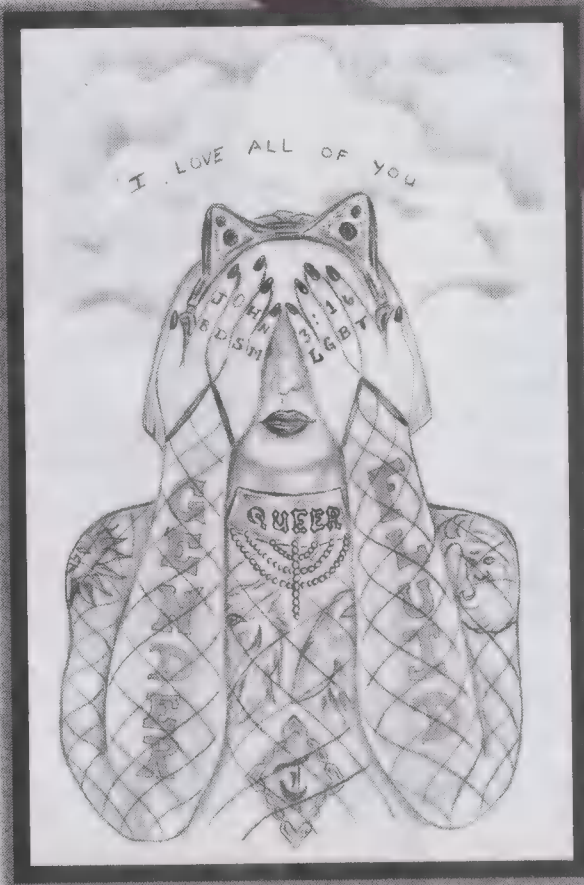
A personal story I like to bring up when people ask, "Well, what do we do with rapists and murderers?" and that sort of thing, because that's just an inevitable question that I get, pretty much every single day. I like to bring up this story about my friend who was incarcerated for murder when she was sixteen years old. She grew up in a really heavily religious household as ■ closeted queer teenager and was very heavily abused. She kind of snapped one day and killed her abuser.

She was tried as an adult, sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole, and has been in there for over ten years now. Since then, she has been severely beaten, she's been raped, she's been heavily assaulted. She's been stripped of all basic human... just humanity in general, I guess. I really wonder—despite the fact that her own family advocated for her to go to a mental health facility instead—what was the point of incarcerating her? Who did that help? Did it help make her community safer?—because she killed the person who was abusing her. She's not a cold-blooded murderer. And since then, her life has been completely taken from her and she's been subjected to the most horrific amounts of abuse.

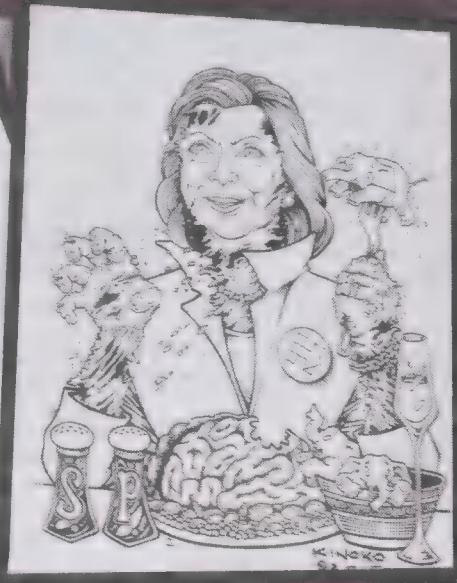
And a lot of time when people are like, "The murderers! The rapists!" it denounces people just to one tiny little part of who that person is. It strips that person completely of what makes that person a person. And in our culture, it's so hard for people to find any kind of redemption. Once a person messes up in any sort of way, then we're like, "Well, that person is done. That person will never be redeemed. That person is no longer a person and deserves anything that happens to them, in prison or otherwise."

It ignores that situations aren't black and white; each case is multifaceted. "Do prisons, which perpetuate cycles of horrific abuse and trauma, really help rehabilitate? Or do they just make the situation worse?" And I think part of abolition is finding compassionate accountability for people. Realizing that people are more than—this is kind of ■ cliché at this point—the worst thing that they've ever done. We can find ways to help people and help victims of crimes and "perpetrators" without subjecting them to being locked in ■ cage.

Jon: And in that, the one thing that I've never considered when reading the "how to talk to wrestling fans" zine is when this person kills their abuser, the State is saying there's a crime that's been committed and then the State is also taking that person who did the crime and saying, "You need to pay your debt to us," when The State had nothing to do with the



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crime that was committed. And as we know a lot of time, that's big money for the State or for corporations to house someone. So, when you talk about retribution, oftentimes that retribution needs to take place between two parties and the prison system is neither one of those parties. It's just stepping in and saying, "We'll take care of this."

Casper: The criminal justice system doesn't actually help the victim in any way unless that victim thinks they will have peace of mind by having that person behind bars. It definitely takes the agency away from the person who was harmed and then says, "The way we will fix this problem is stripping the person who harmed you of all their rights, of their humanity, and basically subjecting them to torture. Now do you feel better?" For some people the answer is yes and for others it's no.

Either way, that agency is taken away from the parties involved and given to the State. I think abolitionists generally believe there's a better way than just locking human beings in cages, and that definitely means building better social programs for people and then also having a better sense of community. Like actually getting to know your neighbors and having intervention programs that don't rely on police, taking personal accountability for yourself, for your loved ones, and the people in your life instead of just saying we're going to solve this problem by letting the State take control.

Rosie: When you said that people don't realize queer people are targeted for crimes, I, honestly, was so right there as well. When ABO was first introduced to me, and I learned about it, I was like, "Of course they're targeted!" and I hadn't thought about that before. I think it's a great thing for people to be aware of, because then, not only are they targeted for the crimes, but then they're targeted for abuse once they're in prison.

Casper: Yeah, queer people only make a small percentage of the population to begin with and then in prison actually they make up a larger percentage, which makes sense once you think about it. But they are generally isolated. They'll be put into ad-seg—administrative segregation—which is just a room by themselves, solitary confinement, which is classified as torture, for "their own protection," that's what they say. Or they now have "safe keeping"—I've worked with quite a few people to try to get them moved into—which is not with general population. They're a unit where people who are deemed "at risk" will be placed and that's generally people who are convicted of something like pedophilia, where they're not safe in general population. Or who are queer or who are former police officers or something like that. "Safe keeping" units aren't generally much safer—they're just different from general population. So for queer people, it can still be a really scary place.

One of the things that myself, my friend from Trans Pride Initiative, and one of my friends from the Anarchist Black Cross worked on was trying to implement policy

changes in Texas prisons to make showering safer for trans prisoners. It's such a simple fix—putting shower stalls in with doors so trans prisoners, especially trans prisoners who are on hormones, trans women who are beginning to grow breasts and such, are not showering in full view of other prisoners. It blew my mind that that was not already a thing. Or just implementing small policy changes for making things easier for people to access, like to get started on hormones or access gender-affirming items in commissaries like bras, because bras were not available in men's facilities prior. So that's been a big thing. Or even what people probably wouldn't consider super important but are very important to trans prisoners, is being able to grow their hair out or access makeup or something like that. That's very affirming for trans women in prisons.

Rosie: Yeah, there was a comic about that. The person put on makeup, just stayed in their room, and was able to feel like themselves.

Casper: Yeah, that's something people write in about all the time and something people get very creative with. They find ways to create makeup out of commissary items like Kool-Aid, or melted candy, and such. It's really amazing what people will come up with when they have to.

Jon: The conversation about commissary items reminds me of a *USA Today* article that came out recently. It was during the government shutdown and the headline was basically "Prisoners Eat Special Meals During Government Shutdown."

Casper: Oh, right. [Eye roll]

Jon: And the special meal, first of all, was a holiday meal and there was nothing very special about it. We—free world people—wouldn't consider it special but the article called it "steak," while it was probably more like roast beef for a sandwich. And also commenting that this meal was somehow connected to the government shutdown, when in reality the opposite is true. During government shutdowns, commissary items go away, or don't get restocked, outside time can go away because people are understaffed.

Casper: Right.

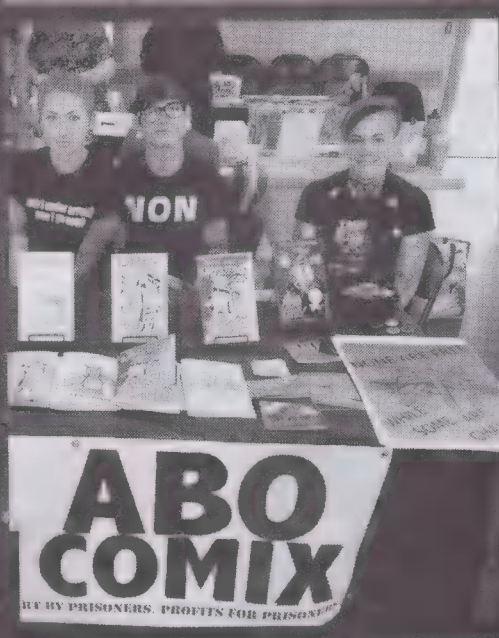
Jon: So this headline painted a grand picture of people in prison living the high life during a government shutdown when that's obviously not what's taking place.

Casper: Yeah, I remember one of the guards in the article saying, "The prisoners are eating better than I am." [laughs] Which is ridiculous!

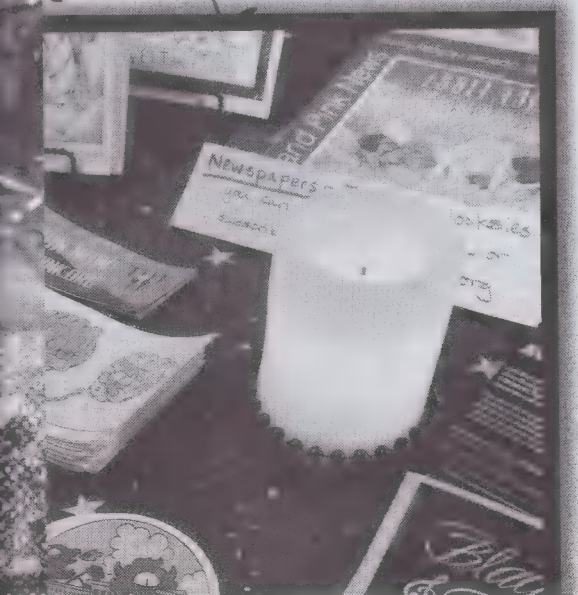
Jon: Right. We've mentioned under representation multiple times and it seems like the one time that conditions inside are getting some attention, the article is grossly over-exaggerating what is going on.

Casper: Of course it depends on what prison it is, too. The government shutdown did not affect all prisons. A lot of the people I write to are in prisons that were not affected. But my understanding is that for prisons affected by the government shutdown, it was bad. They were definitely understaffed. They basically go on lockdown. Every time I get a letter from someone, its like, "We're on lockdown





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again," and basically for no reason. If ■ fight breaks out or something, the entire prison goes on lockdown. For no reason—like if they're understaffed, they can't run rec, they can't run showers. People are just in their cells indefinitely until the facility can fix the problem, which they never fix.

Jon: I think I know the answer to this question, but the anthologies don't make it back into the prisons, do they?

Casper: They do.

Jon: Oh, wow.

Casper: Yeah, we've only been rejected from two prisons in Florida. So all of our contributors receive a copy. Anyone who writes us from the inside received a copy. I'll probably regret saying that. [laughs] But if our budget allows for it, I've never turned anybody down.

Jon: I've been told that *Razorcake* sometimes gets rejected from prisons and sometimes it's really arbitrary. Apparently there was some ad with an animal on a woman's body and it was rejected for being too "sexual." So, I guess I'm surprised because sometimes there are very explicit drawings in ABO Comix about things people go through, and I'm also surprised because it talks about prison abolition at times.

Casper: Me too. I'm extremely surprised. I was one hundred percent sure that we would be banned from all prisons the first time we sent it out but it didn't happen. But we also try to be really strategic. We know what prisons tend to ban, like anything they deem to be pornographic, so we try to censor that with ■ black bar, which you've probably seen. Or anything that can be used to target another person in prison, like someone's full name or prisoner number. We censor those. And we do definitely talk about prison abolition, but not in a way that prisons deem threatening to any specific institution. Part of it has just been luck, I think. The only other reason we have been banned from some prisons was promoting ■ pen pal service, but we have been very lucky, I guess.

Rosie: They rejected you because you were promoting pen pals?

Casper: Some prisons don't allow pen pal services. I guess it would fall under giving out identifying information of ■ prisoner to the general public; like, it could be used to target the person inside. But mostly, I think it's just that they don't want people in prison to have access to the outside world.

Jon: That's interesting that they would worry about targeting people inside because, for example, I've tried to get people to write prisoners in solitary confinement and one of the concerns I got was people not wanting to send their mailing address into a prison for all kinds of reasons. I'm sure people say that to you.

Casper: Right.

Jon: Do you have any answers for that concern?

Casper: Well, we have ■ PO Box. I would generally recommend that. Just like when you meet people in the outside world, you don't know who you're going to be talking

to when you send someone a letter. I've had amazing experiences writing to people and I've had bad experiences. That's just the nature of dealing with people. So of course I think that considering your safety is always a good thing. If you're talking to ■ stranger for the first time, you don't really know what you're going to get. But, also, I don't think it's worth being paranoid or ridiculously overly cautious because, at the end of the day, you're still just making a new friend.

People in prison don't have access to a lot of free world information. A lot of people don't have a lot of family and friends to talk with, and they're generally just really, really excited to get mail from someone on the outside. That just means a great deal to them. I used to give out my home address and that was fine. I never had any issues with it, but now our mail load is so huge that it just makes more sense to have ■ PO Box. I definitely would recommend that, but it's up to the individual person.

Jon: In this conversation that has so much heaviness, it makes me really happy to hear that ABO anthologies make it inside the prison. In one book, Jeremy talks about how meaningful it is to get a letter.

Casper: Yeah.

Jon: I would guess that getting the anthology and realizing your story is being told outside of this place that's confusing you is extremely hopeful for so many.

Casper: Definitely. We get letters from people saying how much they loved the anthology, how much it means to be recognized, and what it means to have their stories and voices out in the free world. It makes me teary eyed to get those letters because, for some people, they've written saying that they were suicidal, that they had nothing to do or nothing to look forward to. And this has given some people some purpose and something to do, something to be excited for, which means ■ lot when you're looking at years or life in prison and don't generally have anything to motivate you.

Jon: Yeah. That was one of my questions. You obviously must hear from people who are depressed or suicidal. What are you able to do for someone who is going through exceptionally dark, emotional times on the inside?

Casper: Writing letters, of course, has been very helpful for people's emotional wellbeing. When people write in asking for resources, I try to send those back. We've got a really amazing resource guide. People generally are like, "Could you help me get a book?" or "A magazine subscription?" So we do that. We put money into people's commissary accounts which helps them buy a little bit more nutritious food. Not much, because it's still prison. Something like being able to buy a candy bar or ■ soda, people wouldn't even think about that out here. But in prison, that's ■ huge luxury. Even just doing little things that, on the outside, we take for granted; helping them through hard times.

Also, just from doing this work for so long, I've learned how to navigate the bureaucracy a little better. So when people

CD & DIGITAL ALBUMS

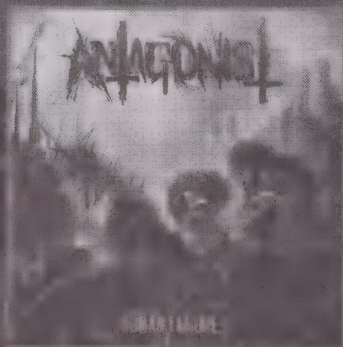
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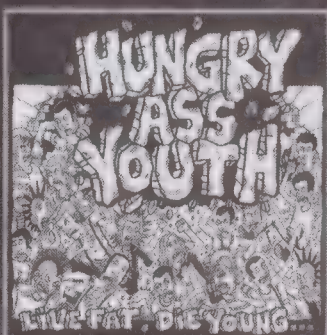
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"The Convicts"
Now Available



I'VE HAD TO SHOW SO MANY PEOPLE HOW TO PROPERLY ADDRESS A LETTER OR ADDRESS AN ENVELOPE, JUST BECAUSE WE'RE NOT USED TO IT.

are having issues with guards or other people in prison, I've found that writing a letter on ABO letterhead to the ombudsman or to the warden generally gets people help very quickly. Because people will file multiple grievances and they'll be "lost" or they'll never hear anything for years sometimes, and then someone from the outside will write ■ letter and say, "I have contacts with the media," and whether or not it's true, the next day something will get fixed.

Jon: Wow.

Casper: One of our contributors had been put in solitary confinement, and had been told that he would be out in two months. He was in there for two years and nobody was giving him a reason why. Every time someone would come to the cell door, he would say "When am I getting out of here? Why am I here?" And they would just say: "Be patient." "It is what it is." "We can't help you." We wrote one letter, and he was out in a week.

Rosie: Gosh, I can't even imagine.

Jon: Yeah.

Rosie: So you have the letters and you have the comics. What percentage of the people writing letters are also writing comics?

Casper: Probably twenty percent. A lot of the people who write in have never made art or comics before. We try to encourage everyone to try. We have a cutesy "How to make comics" zine and pamphlet. I can't draw at all. [laughs] My background is in writing, but just attempting is so much fun. Putting your thoughts down on paper, whether or not you're an accomplished artist, can be very therapeutic. You can see in the anthology that some people have been drawing for decades and some people have never done it before. We have this really cool juxtaposition of both. Our mission is just to tell people's stories whether or not they're accomplished artists.

Rosie: Have you ever thought of expanding into poetry or stories?

Casper: I would love to, definitely. That's on our very long to-do list. I want to help people

publish their memoirs, their poetry, their fiction. But it's difficult right now, mainly because I'm doing most of the letter-writing and my capacity is super limited. We're doing so much grant writing right now, and we just got fiscally sponsored by the Queer Cultural Center. Hopefully this can be my full-time job eventually, but until then, just trying to keep afloat is really difficult. I would love to branch out eventually.

Jon: Each anthology has a page dedicated to someone named Mecca. Their situation is kind of vague in the book.

Casper: Mecca started writing with us in 2017. It's difficult getting information, because people sometimes have to talk in coded language since sometimes their mail is read when it's outgoing or when it comes in. It's difficult for people to talk about specific circumstances sometimes and exactly what's going down. Mecca was up for parole and thinking that they would be going home, and just a month or two prior to their release, they were told that they had two years left. They weren't told why or given any sort of reason. They weren't notified via paperwork which, to my understanding, is illegal. You have to notify someone in ■ written document if their time is exceeding their parole date. They were feeling hopeless and suicidal because nobody was giving them an answer. They didn't know what to do.

It's actually been a little while since I've heard from Mecca. I've written a few letters and it's definitely worrisome to me when we don't hear from some of our people for ■ long time, especially when we know they're going through a rough time. So we do have two dedication pages in there. It's terrifying because even when you call the prison, they don't really give you any information. It's hard to know what's going on sometimes.

Jon: When I was trying to get people to write others in solitary confinement, I was surprised to learn that *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was on the banned reading list. One of the reasons—and this may have

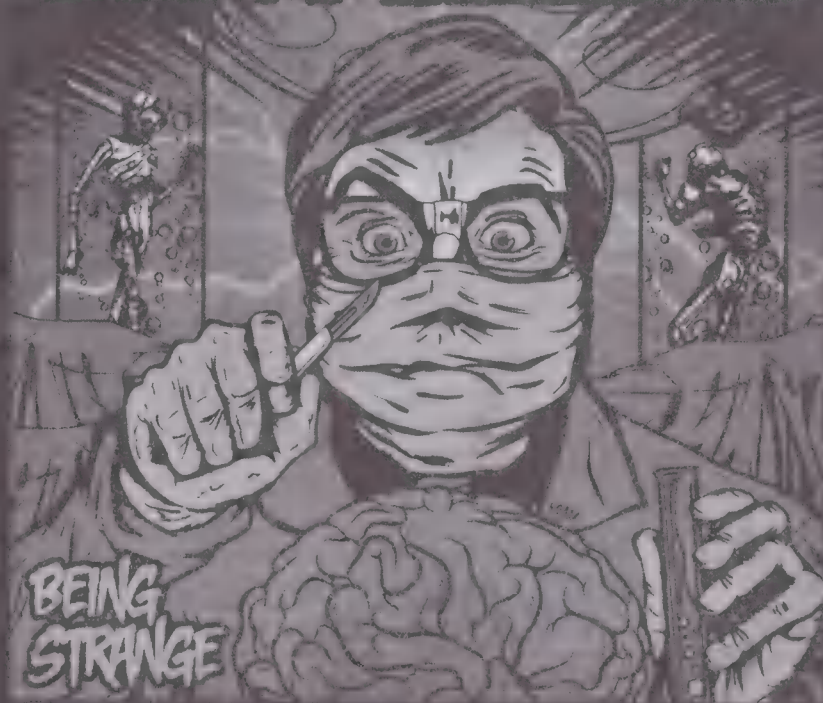
just been one prison or multiple—was that it fell under "gang literature," whatever that means. But it surprised me because I see Malcolm's story as someone who was, for lack of a better term, "reformed." He left his life of crime and drugs and became a minister. But then, as I thought about it more, I thought about how he wasn't reformed in a way that would have pleased the State. He became a black nationalist, he was anti-capitalist. And it made me think of a person who is transgender going before a parole board, or ■ potentially conservative parole board, and being judged, being asked if they are reformed. Does that ring true?

Casper: Yeah...[long pause] Sometimes people are really hopeful about going up for parole and then are devastated because they don't understand how they didn't answer the questions correctly, what they did wrong, or what part of their identity didn't make them eligible for parole, despite never receiving documentation inside prison for any wrongdoing, or being a "model inmate." They're just really confused about what happened and why. We do get that sometimes.

So what we've started doing is writing letters of recommendation for people when they come up for parole. I'm not actually sure if it helps. I hope it does. I think it could be very helpful if community members on the outside wrote letters saying that a person contributed to our comic, they have a portfolio of art, they're welcome in our community, and we can help them find a job or housing or whatever. I think that could be very helpful for parole boards who are considering whether or not to release ■ person. It's really difficult to understand what standards a parole board has as to whether or not a person is rehabilitated. I think it's very much open to what that person on that parole board thinks of the person before them, which is stupid.

Jon: If someone is reading this and they're interested in writing to a prisoner, what is the process they go through? And second, this

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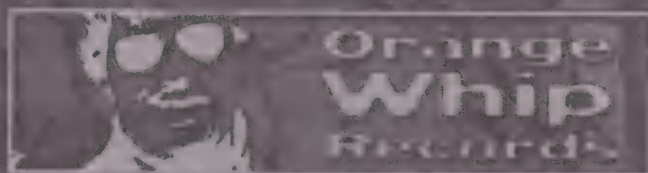


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seems strange to have to ask, but what do they write about to people who are in prison?

Casper: I'll start with the second part. When writing to people in prison, talk to them like you would talk to a person you are meeting for the first time. There aren't really any special guidelines or anything. I would just say to be careful about the kind of topics you bring up because all of your mail is being opened and read in the mailroom by guards first so don't write anything that's going to get people in trouble or get you banned like, "I'm gonna light the prison on fire!" [laughs]

Jon: And that's why I ask, because I've heard of people getting very political when they write to prisoners. I wonder if people inside don't want to talk politics. I imagine they're just looking for some connection.

Casper: Yeah. *Black and Pink* is a really good resource. Blackandpink.org. They help hook up people with pen pals on the inside. They have a database where you can access information and little biographies of people looking to write. And it also has answers listed to: "Do you want to talk politics?" "Are you interested in a romantic relationship?" So they have a checklist for letters they want to receive. I would say that probably ninety-nine percent of the people who have written to ABO don't have a lot of people, like don't have friends or family on the outside, and have written looking for pen pals. So, if people connect with any of those stories and want to write a letter, I heavily encourage people to send us an email and we'll gladly hook them up. Letter writing means the world to people in prison and it's so, so difficult to get people to send a first letter to someone. I don't know why it's so hard—maybe because we live in this digital age and people are like, "I can't write a letter! I don't know how!" [laughs]

Rosie and Jon: Yeah.

Casper: It's so funny because I've had to show so many people how to properly address a letter or address an envelope, just because we're not used to it. [laughs] Prior to doing this project, I just loved pen paling with people. There's just something about holding a letter from someone or getting something in your mailbox that's so meaningful. That can really make your entire day.

Jon: Yeah, for sure.

Casper: And there's something about writing a letter, or even typing a letter that taps into your primal brain a little bit. It just feels amazing. There's something about creating a friendship that way that's great on all ends.

Jon: I guess it's a sign of how dehumanizing prison is that to hear you use the word "friendship" is a reminder that. "Oh yeah, these are friendships that are forming." Even to have to ask a question like, "What do you write about?" They're people. They just want to talk.

Casper: Yeah. That's a big thing. A lot of people come into this thinking they're doing charity work or thinking that writing someone on the inside gets them cute little "ally points." But then they write a letter and

realize that this is a two-way relationship, and this person is doing just as much for you as you are for them. People make some amazing friendships this way, learn so much new information about the way our world works, and things we don't think about. Some of my best friends now are through this project. They're people who have taught me so much about the world and myself. These friendships are just invaluable and I encourage everybody to write to somebody in prison.



If you're interested in some of the ideas that have influenced ABO Comix and this interview, Casper recommends the following books:

Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex.

Edited by Nat Smith and Eric A. Stanley (AK Press)

Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States.

Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock (Beacon Press)

Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law,

Dean Spade (Duke University Press)

Against Equality: Prisons Will Not Protect You. Ryan Conrad (AE Press)


Are Prisons Obsolete? Angela Davis (Seven Stories Press)

Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women. Victoria Law (PM Press)

Rosie Goncive lives in the East Bay with her husband, son, and two cats. She plays drums in two bands (toyGuitar and Genuine Parts), and when she's not drumming or momming, she enjoys writing, reading, and going to punk shows.

Jon Mule was raised on satanic panic and nonfat foods. He teaches special education in Whittier, Calif. and occasionally plays songs with The Bloody Westerns. They are not a country band.

RAZORCAKE 49



JUST LIKE WHEN YOU MEET PEOPLE IN THE
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YOU'RE GOING TO BE TALKING TO WHEN
YOU SEND SOMEONE A LETTER.



CRISTY C. ROAD

**INTERVIEW BY EVER VELASQUEZ
AND TODD TAYLOR**

INTRODUCTION BY EVER VELASQUEZ

We were fortunate to catch up with Cristy C. Road while she was on her West Coast Sister Spit reading tour. Cristy's a Cuban-American writer, musician, ponx mujer, visual artist, zine maker, *Razorcake* contributor/supporter, professor, and illustrator who channels her own bruja energy in Brooklyn, New York.

Cristy has always been someone I've admired as an artist who can bring so many distinct threads together in her work. She's able to combine Latinx cultura, ponx, art, and zine-making while being unapologetically queer. *Green Zine* was born in 1997, which was her own inked dedication of her love for the band Green Day. It later became an outlet for her to share her voice as a Latinx queer abuse survivor and her personal journey of self-growth. She currently fronts the band Choked Up, which has taken off from where The Homewreckers left off in 2016. Pull up a seat and let's get into the world of Cristy Road. There will be plenty of surprises, shared memories, remembrances of Lookout! Records, and insights into how she's able to make it all happen and make it look easy.

Ever: Hey Cristy, it's good to have you here in L.A. Thank you for visiting us again.

Cristy: Thank you. I didn't expect to come to a beautiful garden with an overlook. [laughs] I was expecting to go very industrial warehouse, but no, I feel like I'm at home.

Ever: This is *Razorcake* HQ. We're excited. So Cristy—what can we say about you that no one knows?

Cristy: Um, I've only been to the dentist twice.

Ever: I hate the dentist.

Todd: How'd it go?

Cristy: The first time, I apparently had a protective layer of filth covering my mouth for about twenty-two years of no dentistry. And then the next time they were like, "Oh, you got all these cavities." The first time they were like, "Your teeth are great. Just floss." [laughs] Three years forgetting to floss. And now I'm very serious about flossing.

Ever: Yeah. I'm convinced that you're either a dentist or a serial killer.

Cristy: Oh, wait, just me? Or everyone on earth? [laughs]

LAYOUT BY LAUREN DENITZIO
PHOTOS BY CAM EVANS, LORIEN LAMARR,
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TRANSCRIPTION BY ELLY DALLAS
ORIGINAL ARTWORK COURTESY OF
CRISTY C. ROAD

Ever: No, people who are like, "I want to be a dentist."

Cristy: No, no, no, I write songs and I make drawings.

Ever: And they're rad. I love them. I'm a big fan. So, Cristy, how did zine making come into your life?

Cristy: The first zine that I ever saw, it was by somebody who I was punk pen pals with.

Ever: Cute!

Cristy: I think it was through *Maximum Rocknroll*. It wasn't really in my local community or anything. I found *MRR* at the record store. I knew about Bay Area bands. I loved Green Day and I loved Rancid, but I didn't really know much. I was still just trying to find people. I had just discovered riot grrrl too. I made this pen pal who wrote a zine called *Andigynous Sanity*—a word made up of "androgynous" and "indigenous"—and I was like, "This is the future, this is communication, this is the media, this is what we're going to do for the rest of our lives." And I loved it. I had also heard of zines in record inserts of these bands. I didn't know how vast the world of self publishing was—that there was all these xeroxed, not newsprint, things floating around the world.

And then I started my own in 1997 that was all about Green Day! I felt sad that with Green Day—there was just this whole divide. I wasn't in the community. I didn't know what people were experiencing, but I felt stressed out by there being these one-sided conversations about them signing to a major label. I felt like if you grew up poor and you get offered a bunch of money, you should be able to take that money and live your life. Just as long as you don't become ■ huge douchebag, as long as you keep showing up in your community and doing stuff. I got into Green Day. They were on tour with Pansy Division.

Ever: Yeah.

Cristy: There were all these things that I liked. I felt like I needed them in order to start feeling safe as just a person in the world, and knowing I was maybe possibly queer and just being the sad, isolated creature in Miami, Florida, in a red state, ■ very conservative town. The zine was all about how I did not believe Green Day sold out, by definition. I would write about their lives. I was in the fan

club and I would xerox all the stuff I'd get from the fan club.

All of a sudden, the world's so small. Green Day and all of their friends were like, "Oh my god!" [screams]. I interviewed Larry Livermore (co-founder of Lookout! Records) in the second issue, and then I started interviewing bands. I interviewed Mr. T Experience in the fourth issue, and The Queers. Anything on Lookout!. And then it was this fun variety. I interviewed Molly Neuman from Bratmobile—they had just released *Ladies, Women and Girls*—and American Steel. The zine had become mature at that point. The East Bay punk content stayed pretty prevalent to the late '90s. And then I started experiencing traumatizing, horrible things and I started reading more zines like *Doris*.

Todd: Oh yeah.

Cristy: I grew up reading *Cometbus*—and more personal stories and narratives that take place in punk—but are just telling these other stories about healing and growing and love. I wrote a lot about love. I wrote a lot about falling in love. But then that just kind of turned into writing about the other side of relationships, which is dramatic and painful. And then the music content of the zine just kind of stopped around 2002. I don't know; I'm bad at math. It just became personal stuff and then it snowballed into everything I do now. The zines turned into graphic novels. I would like to publish another *Green Zine*, but I take so long to do things. [laughs]

Ever: Sometimes it's about timing, too. I think you have to be completely in it, in whatever you're doing.

Cristy: Yeah.

Ever: If not, it's not going to be the best and then you're going to think about so many different ways it could've been better.

Todd: And psychic energy too.

Cristy: Yeah, I do what wants to come out of me. It is why I feel like playing music has become more—I don't know—not easier, but just more natural, because writing stories and illustrating is this thing I plan out. My last project was *The Next World Tarot*. It was my first non-memoir, and it's a tarot deck about revolution and seeing the world through this perspective that is about kindness and supporting people and understanding each

other's differences and all these values I've always had in the zine and in my music. But it's this other thing. Art—it's like I sit down, I plan it and I do it. I don't have ■ sketchbook. I never do it for fun. It's not calming. [Everyone laughs] Sorry, world! It's invigorating and magical.

I'll sit there and be like, "Oh my god, this line looks so cool!" But writing a song is like, I'm walking down the street and this shit comes into my head 'cause I can't stop thinking about my crush or I can't stop thinking about this fight I just had. The thoughts come out as songs, like my brain is ■ Broadway musical.

Ever: I like that. [laughs]

Cristy: So songwriting, it's just this totally different craft and it felt so sacred because it would just come out of me and it didn't feel like a grind at all. I just never pursued music outside of DIY punk. The Homewreckers, my old band, was offered a show once with World Inferno/Friendship Society at the Webster Hall and it was really awesome. We were like, "Whoa! This sound is really good! Monitors!" [Everyone laughs]

Cristy: Like, it was a high, but it was also like, "This is not my life," you know? Now I'm like pushing forty and I'm like, "I wrote this song, it's sacred. It has to sound good to the audience... What is *this*? Duct tape on my mic?"

Ever: [laughs] So with all of your different published works, which one would you say is your absolute favorite? *Spit and Passion* has

a really strong place in my heart because, as a survivor as well, I think it's beautiful to talk about how music and self-care all ties in.

Cristy: [sighs] I don't know. I think it always changes. Right now, *Spit and Passion*, my graphic novel about discovering Green Day, is my favorite lately. The 25-year anniversary of *Dookie* was the other day, so you know.

Todd and Ever: [laughs]

Cristy: It's my full circle career, um...

Todd: Retrospective?

Cristy: Yeah, it's my retrospective. It's about everything that happened before *Green Zine*. I had no friends, I had no life. I just had Green Day and the concept of something like East Bay punk and this stuff I read about Gilman Street and people hanging out with each other who are all sad together. So it's just this time of only having that and feeling very old and weird and wise, and, "God, I'm so tired of life." I know people would read my old zines and be like, "Ummm, this is offensive and this is misspelled." And then they find out I'm fifteen and they're like, "Oh." But yeah, *Spit and Passion* takes place when I was twelve or eleven or—I don't know—um, forty.

Ever: [laughs]

Cristy: I was definitely very sad and ready to be an old person. I was just so disillusioned by the city I lived in and the world around me, but I just needed to hold on. So this music was there for me and it's about realizing I'm in the closet. It's my coming out memoir about not coming out. I'm excited about it

because when it came out, I was not in ■ good place. I was healing from sad stuff: breakups, family stuff. It was just ■ rough time.

The book did so well and people were so excited about it. The release event was at the Brooklyn Museum. There was so much I could be present for, but I was just sad instead and needing love and wanting to fall in love and have a partner. I just didn't feel grounded and I felt like my work wasn't enough. I felt like I was just this product of my trauma. I wish I could enjoy the art like the fans did. I was like, "This is just me and my voice, but what about other humans?" What about companionship? I was in a dark place. And then after that, connecting to ancestral magic and queer people of color and the Cuban community—all these things that I didn't look for because I had punk—and I was like, "I don't fucking need any of this shit."

Todd: Right. Punk's your identity.

Cristy: Yeah, I have, fucking, the Lookout Records! catalog.

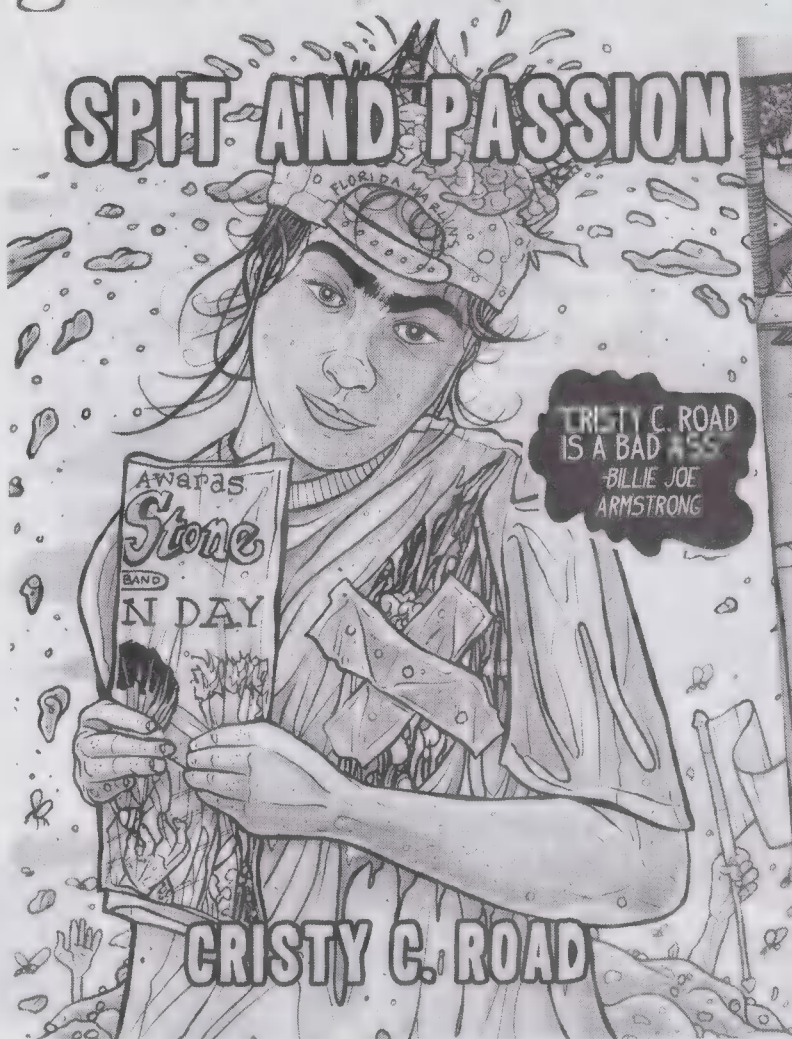
Ever: Yeah. [laughs] That's how I felt, too. In my head I was always like, eventually I'll find my own people, my own weird—the people who are going to get me and understand how I'm feeling and say, "No, that ain't stupid. It's going to be just fine."

Cristy: Yeah, and getting intentional about that and mixing that into all my work that I do was this huge, weird life change, 'cause I was always just so checked out and focused on creating a project, showing up for the community, or setting up the show than on



I THINK LOVE IS GREAT. I THINK THAT IT'S SUPER GROUNDING AND IT'S HEALING AND IT'S NOT A COPOUT HEALING. IT'S NOT LIKE, "POSER, YOU'RE NOT REALLY HAPPY. YOU JUST GOT FUCKED."

SPIT AND PASSION



living my life. The magic and joy I feel from seeing a band, that was always the biggest high. Like performing with my band—I don't know—it was always punk. Punk was the religion. It was the thing and it wasn't that I stopped getting that high; it was just knowing that's not enough. A lot of people, they find that groundingness in all kinds of stuff, and finding that groundingness in a relationship is fine. I just wanted to be in love and then I just needed to fill that void with punk, magic, and witchcraft. [Todd and Ever laugh.]

I think love is great. I think that it's super grounding and it's healing and it's not a copout healing. It's not like, "Poseur, you're not really happy. You just got fucked." So I do believe in all that, but everyone's got their time. And it's like, if I feel lonely and crazy, but I keep creating stuff, I need to figure out a way to continue, but it not be a bad thing.

Todd: Right. What do you think has changed the most for you over time? It seems like you're in a better place now. Does it just have to do with not only age, but really engaging yourself in these things, and sometimes you have to stare at the void to realize, "Oh, there's good shit here too."?

Cristy: Yeah, definitely being more objective and more picking and choosing my battles instead of trying to be a part of everything.

Also, judging myself for not being committed to this one scene or this one. And that was a thing, being younger and being very like, "I have to do it this way and I'm not gonna play that because it's owned by blah blah blah and they suck."

Or, "That festival is this weird indie rock festival." Or, "This festival is this broey festival. Like Sum 41 is playing. Fuck that." But now I feel like I deserve to take up that space and I feel that way about all my favorite bands. Let's fucking fuck shit up at Coachella. I love and am so inspired by Downtown Boys. I'm in a pop punk band called Choked Up, so we probably won't end up in the same venues that more indie garagey bands end up in. We've got a lot of power pop songs and we have a lot of Spanish songs. All of our new songs are pretty dancey and almost feel like some Toni Basil, some George Harrison's solo project.

Playing in rock concerts and these environments that aren't necessarily punk, aren't necessarily feminist—that's a huge part of it, doing things that I know aren't necessarily, inherently feminist—but I will do whatever the hell I want and I will say what I want to say. All the bands I've loved have done that, and inspired me. It was kind of the root of the *Green Zine* and feeling like

Green Day didn't sell out. If you're using these huge platforms to say what you believe in and hold people up, then that's awesome.

But yeah, I definitely had set up a bunch of walls when I needed to protect myself from mainstream culture and focus on folk punk and self-releasing all my work. It wasn't until I released *Bad Habits*—a graphic novel about healing from abuse and moving to New York City, quitting punk for a minute, becoming a club kid, and doing a ton of drugs—all for the sake of reconnecting to my body. So when that book came out and when that era of making art happened, it was around 2008 and it was when I started realizing, "Oh, I could participate in all these things." I had this taste of what my life is now, and it was when I started working with *Razorcake* and doing art for you all.

I would wear high heels to the grocery store. It was this Cristy Road rebirth 2008, 2009. And it was really awesome. Then I fell in love, I crashed. I needed isolated DIY punk. I think it's important to remember the spaces that have held you, even if there was a moment where I was like, "I don't want to do this because I can't do anything that's run by men right now," or "I can't do anything that's run by white people right now." And if you need that, you need that. And there was a

IT WAS TIME THAT I AM AGAIN, THE ONE I GREN UP, CAME OUT AND WENT OUT—ALEX—TO THE GREEN DAY SHOW TOGETHER HE SHATED ALONG TO THE TUNES THAT JUSTIFIED OUR SELF WORTH OR YINE SINCE BASED ON ALEX'S T-SHIRTS SEEMED TO TAKE THE CAME BUT THIS WAS MY DREAM GOD DAMN!



BILLIE JOE HANKED A GENTLE LUGIE INTO THE AIR WHILE GRAVITY DEFIED TIME AND SPACE.



THEN HE ALL WENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL MALL TO EAT



THEN I WOKE UP MY PERIOD ENDED, AND I HAD TO GET TO SCHOOL, BUT ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS REPLAY THE LAST 8 HOURS IN MY HEAD, OVER AND OVER.



C. ROAD

I NEEDED ISOLATED DIY PUNK. I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THE SPACES THAT HAVE HELD YOU.

time where I was like, "I'm only playing the queer core shows now." It was what I needed at the time. And what sucks about that is feeling like you could never go back and you could never re-embrace something.

I think that just comes from dogmatic punks who don't want to deal with someone else's political values. It's like, "Oh well, this is a punk show. We're not like, racist. This isn't a skinhead thing." Or, "We just feel like if you start talking about that thing, it's gonna stress out some people and cause, you know... so maybe just don't play that song." And just that vibe. I just am like, "I'm not even gonna try. I'm not even going to be a part of it." Now I feel excited to reconnect to so many things. We're playing a lot of cool stuff that I'm not announcing yet, but, it's awesome. We're stoked.

Ever: Well, you have an army of support behind you. What advice would you give folks who want to go to art school? Do you feel that it helped you or do you feel you would have been okay without it?

Cristy: I think it depends what you want to do. I would have been okay without it. For my undergrad schooling, I had the support to go, so I went, but I was a really bad student. I got really bad grades—it was like figure drawing

boot camp. I took figure drawing three to four days a week for four years. It was kind of like, "Do this right and develop your own style and be amazing!" and that was awesome.

Ever: Figure drawing is hard. I've had people tell me, "Yeah, draw me a pinup." I could do all of it but the boobs. The boobs are really hard for me. [laughs] "I'll draw all the rest of it, but you just handle the boobs."

Cristy: We'll do a collaboration.

Ever: Okay. [laughs]

Cristy: Yeah, I went to grad school for the piece of paper, but actually, it was at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) in New York City, and, as a public school—super affordable and really awesome teachers. I learned so much more than I expected. And I'm not even teaching now. I was teaching for a semester and I'm like, "Am I too punk? Am I too slutty and messy for this?" I love being serious and lecturing and doing these things, but I'm still myself. I can't not be myself.

Ever: I think people would take your class just because of you being yourself. Unapologetically.

Todd: Was that pressure coming from you or them?

Cristy: I don't know. I think I have made up this thing that if you're teaching and posting

too much about sex and weed on your Instagram, your students or the administration will be weird about it, but maybe that's not real. Maybe I'm making that up.

Ever: That's why you pretend. You're like, "I don't know what Instagram is. It's private. Nobody knows."

Cristy: Yeah. [laughs] Well, I do do that. It was cool. I really liked that program for reminding me what illustration is outside of being an illustrator in punk activism, queer feminist, 'cause you get so stuck in your field and your niche. So that's a nice thing about grad school and undergrad. But if you're a good artist, it's so different now with the internet.

Todd and Ever: Yeah.

Cristy: I didn't have that.

Todd: Yeah, neither did I. So, if I may—when you started engaging with Green Day—it was a different world in punk because lines were drawn for selling out. So I think that since you're not an ideologue, you're like, "Okay, this is the way I see things at fifteen. I'm going to keep that." You're able to see nuance, you're able to say, "These three fine young men have made music that really resonates with me. I see they are giving back to their community and they're doing it in

an intentional way." It's good they donated to Gilman Street. They helped with *Turn It Around*, the documentary about East Bay punk. So I think that's a good way to look at it and also to reinvigorate yourself. You're not responsible to your fifteen-year-old self. You can change and grow as an artist.

Cristy: Yeah.

Ever: I agree.

Cristy: And even them, supporting my zines and my work and stuff.

Todd: Right, right.

Cristy: And not just them. That was something I learned about punk, where some people shamed or frowned upon fan culture, but at the end of the day, everybody was this crazy fan of each other. We all loved each other's bands and we all were friends. Being a crazy fan is good. We're all sad.

Todd: I just think it's also case-by-case. You know we shouldn't make this, "We should all just get as much money from corporate America as possible. That's awesome!" blanket statement. There are things that are, "No, that shit's still fucked up. That company hurt a lot of friends I know." Versus, "We'll decide if Coachella is going to throw us a weird amount of money and we play to a bunch of disenfranchised hipsters in the middle of the desert. It's early enough so it's not too hot. Let's take that money and run."

Cristy: And also continuing to talk about the problems with Coachella, both the funding and the space it's using. There's so many things we consume every day that suck. Like what company made these microphones? [laughs] Like this table!

Todd: Hey, this is the SM58, this is a good one. [laughs]

Cristy: Oh, okay. All right.

Todd: And we got these desks, recycled from a non-profit. [laughs]

Cristy: Oh, shit. I made these desks, actually. These are DIY. [Todd and Ever laugh]

Todd: But it's thinking about every step, but not being overwhelmed by it. You're still making art.

Cristy: Yeah, I do see that as a big part of being older and doing the same thing, but older.

Todd: I'm still pissed at a lot of people who got amnesia about grassroots punk when they got famous, but there are other people who have proven otherwise. Because some bands aren't that way, that are on a major label. They're like, "We got our money, fuck you."

Cristy: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Todd: "We're awesome, who the fuck are you?"

Cristy: Yeah and I really feel that way. Um [long pause] yeah. I agree and I think it's always good to reflect on...

Ever: [whispers] Green Day. [Everyone laughs.]

Todd: Okay. So did you get to meet them face to face? Are you buddies with them?

Cristy: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Ever: They're tight now. [laughs]

Cristy: No, no yeah. It's great. It's very magical to casually interact.

Todd: Has somebody Green Day-ed you?

Cristy: What does that mean?

Todd: Has somebody been such a huge fan of you, like, "I love all your stuff. It's the 25th anniversary of Cristy releasing this this day," or anything like that?

Cristy: Somebody hasn't done that. They should. That's mean—someone should do that! [Everyone laughs]

Cristy: I'm very grateful for my friendship. And that is something I learned. First it was Billie Joe and Jason White who I would talk to, and just normalizing the interaction. It's just like you're this other creator of things.

Todd: Right.

Cristy: And we're going to appreciate each other's work 'cause that's how punk is, you know? That's what punk is. The thing with the fan thing and punk, it's about—of course there's a hierarchy, of course we're going to acknowledge it—but understanding everybody's able to see each other's role in the world and appreciate it.

Todd: I also think it's appreciation and not idolatry, because if you set 'em up on a pedestal, if they do bad shit, you're like, "Oh, I'm blind to it. I don't know what's going on."

Cristy and Ever: Yeah.

Cristy: I mean, I have a really nice pedestal, so when I put people on it, they're really happy.

Todd and Ever: [laughs]

Cristy: It has really good lighting.

Ever: So what was it like for a young Cristy Road growing up as a queer punk artist in a Latino household? How did that go over or not go over?

Cristy: I had a lot of secrets, I had my secret life. My zines and my art, I would just do it on my own. I had a lot of pen pals, and then the internet started and it was even easier to have a secret social life. Even my friends in the punk scene and who I met at school and stuff—I don't know—I felt like I was in the closet mostly. But the punk scene in Miami at the time, especially now, it seems similar, but it just seemed more mixed. Like it was this place to go when you're a freak, you're a goth, you're drug dealer, you're a sex worker. You're just you. You have this other life that is not welcomed by our super red state, conservative Miami. I noticed that there was this whole mixed group of people. At punk shows and at school, it was just kind of like,



BAD COP / BAD COP

"Oh, this is where I can go be queer," but in a way, where I feel safe or I feel better. I didn't find a queer community. I just kind of found punk, but I wasn't out because it wasn't a queer punk scene. It wasn't a feminist punk scene. It was just freaks surviving and an open mindedness. The second that I would come out to someone like, "I think I'm bi," it was just like, "Don't sit next to me."

Todd: Oh, really? Ahhh!

Ever: That's crazy.

Cristy: It was just a weird vibe with other women who are straight girls. But then I would just stop telling people for a couple months. Then I'll tell someone, and if that was supportive then I would just hold onto that. It was like, "This should just be easier."

Todd: Right.

I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO MERGE THOSE TWO THINGS—DRAWING TRADITIONAL, BEAUTIFUL PORTRAITS AND THEN THESE CRUSTY-ASS DRAWINGS.



Ever: Yeah.

Cristy: I just felt like I was very isolated to punk for a long time. It wasn't until I was nineteen or twenty that I started being more in this riot grrrl community, where there were more queer activists and I put pop punk away for a minute. It was 2003 until 2006. I loved new things. *Feminist Sweepstakes* by Le Tigre. I would try to get into Ladytron and I'd be like, "This is good," and then I'd be like, "I'm so bored, I can't do this." And then I put *Feminist Sweepstakes* back on. "Everything's going to be fine." [laughs] Then I just remember this one day I was living in Philly and somebody started playing Rancid's *Ler's Go*, and I was just like...

Ever: [laughs] You're all, "Yes!"

Cristy: I was like, "Oh my god! [screams] This is my soul!" And then I moved to New York City and there were so many cool bands. There was this really cool DIY punk happening in Brooklyn and all these pop punk bands in Queens that were more apolitical, but it was just so many good bands at the time. It was a good time. The Steinways, Crybaby MacArthur, Hoover Flags. Early 2000s: New York City pop punk wonderland. Even The Homewreckers were really good. [Everyone laughs] Fronted by Cristy Road. That was 2008, a good time.

Ever: We were talking about how coming out played out with your family.

Todd: Yeah, how about your family itself?

Cristy: I was very secret and that's it. The end of my story. I just kept it secret for a real long time.

Todd: Why did you feel like you had to keep it secret?

Cristy: Because there was just so much homophobia. It was casual, too. It was gay jokes and just this...

Todd: Which gives you red flag after red flag after red flag.

Cristy: Yeah, like, if it was hostile, I would know how to act more. Since it wasn't, it was just like, "Let me just not deal with it right now. Because it seems like it's a problem, but it doesn't seem like I'm actually going to hell." Like, I didn't believe that. I haven't experienced that much of the Catholic guilt in a way that I know I'm experiencing. And I've always been kind of like, "Well, fuck you. I'm just going to have a secret life right now."

I just started talking about getting into my identity in punk, but my family was this other life. I just kept this arm length distance for awhile and was in the closet. I left when I was eighteen and my mom still called me three times a day or more. There were definitely years where I felt going home for Christmas was awkward. Then I came out when I was about twenty-six to my mom. I remember when I went on the first Sister Spit tour in 2007. "I'm on a queer author tour right now." And my mom was like, "What does it mean by queer? What's queer?" And I'm just like, "It's like feminism, mom. Don't worry about it." [Todd and Ever laugh]

And I'm out now. My whole family's like, "Queer! Look, it's queer. Do you want this?"



Todd: They clip the queer things out of the newspaper.

Ever: I think with Latino households it's kind of like a thing, where it's like, "Oh, eso no pasa en esta familia": "This doesn't happen in this house."

Cristy: "Eso Nada!" "Over my dead body!" [laughs]

Ever: Yeah. "It happens to houses over there." But once they realize like, "Oh wait, it does happen in our house. It's okay, we're going to be fine. We're going to figure it out."

Todd: No one's going to hell.

Cristy: Yeah. The "no one's going to know" is also another thing where it was like, all right, it'll still be secret. It's still imperfect. It's not like if we invite a bunch of people over, I'm not going to be super gay and just start talking about my fucking gay-ass life and then be like, "No, I'm actually pan. I like every gender as long as they're punks, as long as they dress punk," 'cause I'm a grownup, you know. I'm a poseur. [Todd and Ever laugh.]

It's cool with my family. They're very supportive in a way that I didn't even think was an option when I was a kid. They were always loving, but when homophobia is in the fabric of socialization, how do you even imagine a world without that? And now it's normal and it's like if I talk about having a crush on a guy, it's not like, "Good! That's good! Oh! A guy!"

It's not like that anymore. They know I like everything the same and everyone is an asshole. [yelling] And that heartbreak is always the same! Yeah, punk was always like this nice blanket to protect them from everything 'cause it was like, "I'm not gay, I'm just punk."

Ever: I think in late '80s/early '90s, parents were like that more. I think now they're starting to be, "Oh, okay that happens. It's fine. My kid isn't a drug addict. My kid is functioning, so they're good."

Todd: Yeah. "They're creative."

Cristy: Yeah, yeah, they did love the zine. That was the other thing. My mom would read the zine in the beginning and she'd just be like, "What the fuck are you talking about?" I would put a piece of paper over the cuss words so she won't see them and she knows this now. We all think it's funny. [Everyone laughing]

But yeah, she would look at them, 'cause I would go make all these fucking copies. She didn't know where I was sending it. The internet was new. I would post, "Send me a dollar and I'll send you the zine." It was just this world that was opening me up to all kinds of weirdos and potential danger, but it seemed so creative and productive that they were able to see the value in punk as this educational platform.

Ever: What artists do you feel have helped you develop your own personal style? I feel that your art has a really strong but yet very feminine energy to it. It's real raw.

Cristy: I love that you describe it like that. I've kind of narrowed down my influences, 'cause there's so much stuff I love. Do y'all remember the *Mash It Up!* comps?

Ever: Yeah [laughs]

Cristy: It's these ska comps. [laughs] And they were so good. And the art on them.

Ever: Your favorite, Todd. [laughs]

Cristy: They were illustrated by Evan Dorkin—who did *Milk & Cheese*—and Coop. I loved that shit growing up. And

then I loved Ren & Stimpy and Spümcø—everything looks kind of slimy and shrink wrapped. So, I'm drawing like that, but then I got really into portrait drawings. So I'm drawing my Green Day portraits and Betty Page and Tim Armstrong, and I didn't know how to merge those two things—drawing traditional, beautiful portraits and then these crusty-ass drawings. He draws anatomical. So I always was just like, I want to draw like Coop, but like, different. I didn't know what that meant. But then I discovered Frida Kahlo and my life changed forever. And it's just like, freedom meets Ren & Stimpy. There's the softness to her work that I don't see in Coop's work at all.

Todd: Right, right.

Cristy: So it was like, how do I bridge my soft pencil and colored pencil drawings of Green Day and Rancid, but look like nothing I've ever done and have ever done again? They're just like a lifelike drawing. I loved doing that. I just didn't know how to mix the two.

Ever: So let's talk about the Next World Tarot.

Cristy: Since it's out, it's the new thing. I am very excited about it.

Ever: I'm excited about it too.

Cristy: Yeah. I'm excited about it being in people's lives in a way that nothing I've ever done is in their lives, because it's not like them relating to my story about loneliness. It's just this tool for reading people's shit and fuckin' being their therapist.

Todd: [laughs]

Cristy: If anybody needs a tarot card reading, let me know.

Ever: Nice!

Cristy: I'm excited about it, but the connection feels—it's so different than writing about

my life. Same with songwriting. Music and performing and being seen all the time is so different than from making art, even though that's ■ weird, intense thing. The tarot deck makes me feel like I'm like, a politician. I'm reading from it on this tour I'm on right now and it just feels like I'm leading a rally of some kind. [Everyone laughs.]

Ever: Well, I think that's part of it. I think with learning tarot and learning all of your ancestral knowledge in everything, it's all about your ancestors being with you and helping guide you to help other people, because we've always been people who have been able to heal ourselves, in a sense, of when it comes to reading tarot, being curanderas anything like that, really.

I feel it's a very beautiful project that's come full circle for you. I feel that the deck is breathtaking. I think it's very significant as well, to the community and what you're representing respectfully. Do you feel that your Cuban roots and traditions guided you into doing this project?

Cristy: Well, it did eventually. In the beginning, The Next World Tarot was a commission by Michelle Tea, the author, and we had no idea what it was going to be. She was like, "I've always wanted to write and publish tarot deck. Do you want to illustrate it?" We were doing this from 2009. We started super slow. I would do one piece and then six months would pass.

Todd: Oh, wow.

Cristy: We were just kind of like, "Let's be air signs, plan a project, and take five years to figure out what's going to actually happen." So some time passed and it's that depression spell I talked about. In order to heal from them, I needed to connect to ancestral magic, which I mentioned earlier.

Realizing, "Oh, the most radical punk anarchist thing is this magic that's about seeing the earth, the sky, the planets, the way that they were seen before colonization, before capitalism." So it's like, "What is more punk and anti-capitalist and environmentalist than acknowledging that the earth and the planets and the world outside of our bodies is just as powerful as our bodies?"

We can have this connection with these energies—shit like psychic energies and coincidence. The occurrences are real and it's magical. It's like when some horrible thing in your life happens and then the most amazing thing ever happens. I believe that there are ancestors protecting us. We all talk about ghosts and ghost stories, but they're just not out to fuck with you. In our Days Inn, the faucet kept turning on in the middle of the night and then turning off and turning on. Ghosts can be fun and weird, but then they could be protective energies. Even if it's just wisdom that is being passed down that you learn about your elders and your ancestors.

Just that knowledge and that awareness and that interest in connecting to Cuba and my past and my family in a way that's beyond just coming out. It's just like being in it. "Damn, the more magical I get, the more I feel like I'm going to start writing chill reggaeton songs." This whole new genre. And then I sit in my room and it's just like [singing enthusiastically] Oh wait, that's not reggaeton. Sorry.

Ever: I can see it, it's gonna be you and Bad Bunny.

Cristy: Oh shit! We want to play with Princess Nokia. I'm putting that out there. She loves emo... As far as talking about performing with hip-hop and other genres.

Ever: With Ivy Queen?

Cristy: Oh yeah!

Ever: I got my print sent to Ivy Queen. She was like, "Oh, thank you."

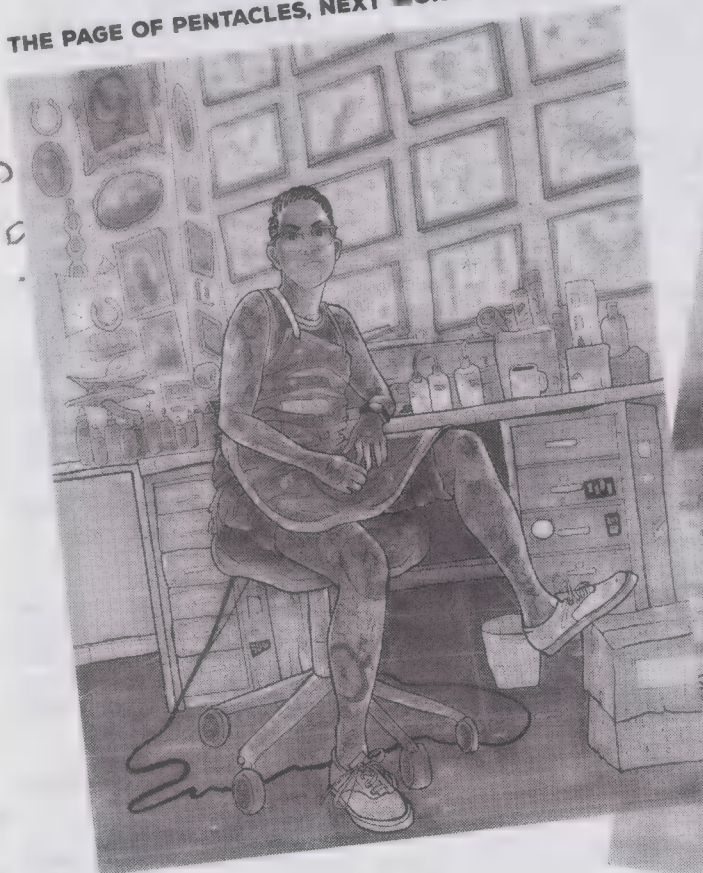
Cristy: Oh man, that'd be awesome. 'Cause yeah, it's awesome to play shows and then after the show somebody being like, "I used to feel like this was impossible, being connected to my culture and also be in a pop punk band," and freak the fuck out 'cause we're playing these fests. It's just these really cool things that are exciting, but used to feel so separate.

Todd: They don't have to be mutually exclusive.

Cristy: Yeah!

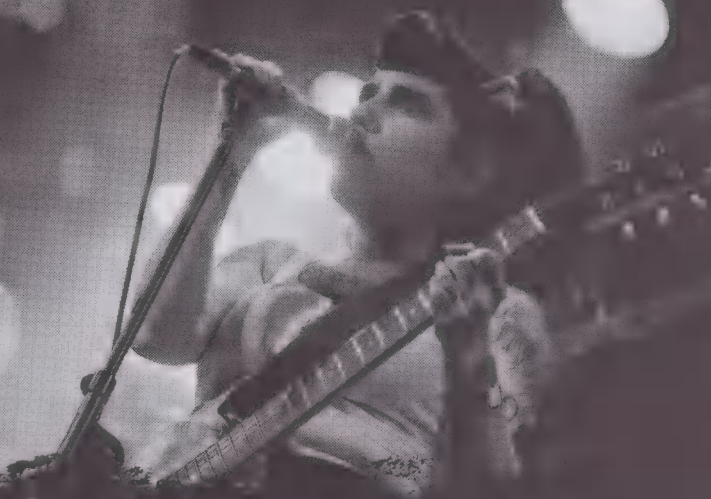
Ever: Yeah, they don't. And I feel like when you're on the path and you're working

THE PAGE OF PENTACLES, NEXT WORLD TAROT



THE SEVEN OF WANDS, NEXT WORLD TAROT





ALL THE ADVICE THE NEXT WORLD TAROT TAROT DECK IS GIVING IS, "ARE YOU A SHADY ASSHOLE?" AND, "ARE YOU LISTENING TO YOUR SHADY PARENTS TOO MUCH?"

towards it and your ancestors know that you're listening with your mind, your heart, your eyes, and every being, they opened the roads for you.

Cristy: Yeah! And sometimes it's creepy. It's like, "Why did you put me here? I'm so confused." But yeah. It's always these moments of realizing your power and realizing I did so much without any connection to magic that I was aware of. I spent all these years being an anarchist. I'm not ashamed. I used to always write about these kind of like mainstream punk bands and then I got to only write about anarchists, hardcore bands.

Todd: You can just write about good bands.

Cristy: Well, no, that's the higher self speaking. But at the time there were different eras of compartmentalizing these different things. And part of that magic is knowing why I made those choices at the time and not being ashamed of them. I was in this folk punk band and I never showered and thought it was fucked up to go to the mall.

A couple years before that and I was really into this like quasi-mainstream punk, like Fat and Epitaph. That was when

Adeline Records started and I was on the street team. I can't remember what band on Fat Records I interviewed, but there were all these subsidiary labels and I feel like I was so excited about punk beyond the local community and this idea of punk, and being in a punk band, and being famous. I don't know how to phrase it. I just feel like there is such a fine line between anarchist DIY punks and punks who are okay with record labels distributed by Warner Brothers. There was a time where I was just like, "No. I love Green Day, but like they're on another path," and then I turned twenty-five and I'm like, "Fuck this path." I'm on the path that I would like to sustain myself and not feel taken advantage of by white guys in dreadlocks.

Ever: [laughs] Yeah.

Cristy: Never again. For me it's all about not being scared of these institutions, or not feeling like they're out to get you.

Todd: Sometimes they're just big and dumb.

Cristy: Yeah, yeah. And at the end of the day it's like, "Are you gonna let me be myself?"... Oh wait, but the tarot deck. Didn't we stop talking about the tarot deck? I'm a Gemini.

[Todd and Ever laugh] But no, the tarot deck. Michelle and I stopped working on it together eventually. She published a book, *Guide to the Modern Tarot* and I think we just both realized what we wanted to do. Instead of abandoning the deck, I got really deep into it and I just implemented more of my magic into it. Some people were like, "Do whatever the hell you want." Some people wanted their ancestral magic to be part of their card. And I did that for them. It was funny, there was like five people be like, I want to be Oshun.

Ever: Oh, of course! Everybody claims that they're crowned Oshun.

Cristy: But I was like, "Okay, everyone can have whatever they want and like." It was really exciting to connect over this project, that's a tarot deck, but all the advice it's giving is, "Are you a shady asshole?" And, "Are you listening to your shady parents too much?" I really want to highlight that because a lot of tarot decks make it about you. They're like, "You're fucked up, you made a shitty decision." And I really wanted it to be like, "Your boss is fucked up and sucks, your mom brainwashed you into



THE PAGE OF WANIE, NEXT WORLD TAROT

making a shitty decision.” I just really want to write about intuition and truth, and following your truth. So I released the deck on my own. I stayed on that path. I did a Kickstarter and it did really well.

Ever: It did super well for you!

Cristy: It was awesome, because it was the

first thing that just did really well on its own and it was weird 'cause I was so invested. I've been so invested in every book I've ever done and I felt very close to them, but it's all felt scary. Also I remember when *Bad Habits* came out and just having so many feelings about how it was received, and also being

very involved in punk and *Razorcake* and the Fest and doing all these things at the time—feeling so torn between the queer literary world and punk. “Why can't I be both, even though all the songs I'm writing are about the same shit that I'm writing about in the book, but I always felt defensive and guarded?”

Half of it was douche people being like, “Your book sucks. It's all about your vagina, that's so boring.” It was just really hard to feel integrated and for a couple of years I was like, “Man, doing a tarot deck, that's going to be fucking weird. I'm gonna lose all my friends.” But no, I have all these new friends and I have all these new supporters who I don't understand. They're just in another world of, like, witchy. A lot of the people that Michelle and I had talked to were just like, “We can't afford this.”

Todd: That's fair. You want to have the production value.

Cristy: Yeah. Or like, “We just don't want to deal with this communist tarot deck.” [Everyone laughs.] It's so much like, “Quit your job if you hate it, stay in your job if you hate it and need it, but make sure that you know you hate it and go to the spa and then quit when you have money saved.” It's just all about being real and people didn't like that. I think that everyone loves the whimsicalness of tarot and how it's so like, “You're fucked” or, “You have found the love of your life.” Fuck that, that's not life.

Ever: Yeah. [laughs]

Cristy: But it's cool. It made sense, too, to feel like my career started with this Green Day zine then it progressed into these personal narratives, and then ended with this personal narrative about Green Day.

Ever: Ended?

Cristy: No, no. The memoir graphic novels; not my career. I'm actually working on a secret graphic novel right now. The tarot deck, it feels like this whole new life. It was just really hard to see myself again and not see this traumatized weirdo who wasn't welcome anywhere and just feeling like I didn't fit anywhere. Now I'm rediscovering things and it all feels new.

Todd: That's what a transformation is, though.

Cristy: Yeah.

Todd: You can't control the transformation or how are you going to come out it, but if you're open to reinserting yourself into it, because the world changes and there are things that are completely out of our control.

“I'M SORRY, I'M LISTENING TO DOOKIE AND TALKING ABOUT BLOWING UP THE GOVERNMENT. OTHERWISE, I'M JUST GOING TO GO HAVE PIZZA LATER AND THAT'S IT.”

Ever: Did the tarot open up you writing a thesis about a tarot and its origin?

Cristy: Yes, yes. MFA and my thesis. We did two theses—a visual and a written one. I basically went to get better paying teaching jobs and ended up learning the history of the tarot! For the visual, I was going to do *Green Zine* 15, which will happen someday. Surprise! [Todd and Ever laugh] It's gonna have everything that it should have had.

History of the tarot thesis—I don't know what's gonna happen with it, but it was so weird to learn about the actual history of the tarot. And that definitely made me more excited to work on it 'cause it was commercialized in Europe and Italy in the 1500s, but that wasn't when it was invented. There's this whole Egyptian and Chinese and Hebrew history of the tarot that was erased or destroyed—all this art, like we don't fucking know. Learning that made me feel even more entitled to it, like it's mine and it's not ■ pagan tradition that I'm stealing. It's like in Santería, they read with cowry shells. I've had my cards read by people of all religions and ethnicities and making the deck made me feel like, "Oh, who am I? I should just be in a pop punk band." [laughs] Then I fucking learned about it and I'm like, "Fuck that. We should all make a tarot deck." [laughs]

Ever: In your household, did you have curandera medicine with your traditions?

Cristy: Growing up?

Ever: Yeah.

Cristy: No, we were Catholic, and these were energies that were around and they were respected. Every now and then there would be a little shell or a little coconut or just something to honor a spirit. But it wasn't practice. We weren't even intense Catholics. We didn't go to church all the time. We celebrated Christmas.

Ever: That's what it was like in my house. Half and half.

Cristy: Yeah, it was respectful and if you talk about it, it was like, "Ya calla te, don't make any jokes about San Lazaro." [laughs] It was just this thing I was always drawn to and it was always brought to me. People would be like, "Oh, there's this energy you should discover, it really reminds me of you." My mom's friend straight up was like, "I got you el elefante... lo tienes que poner al lado de la puerta." And she was just like, "put it with your Elegua. You need this elephant." **Ever:** "You need this."

Cristy: I was older when that happened, but it's just been this succession of how I got into it as an adult. 'Cause even when I was younger and in the '90s when people were into witchcraft, *The Craft* came out [laughs] and I was not into it. Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson, I was not there. I was just like, "I'm sorry, I'm listening to *Dookie* and talking about blowing up the government. Otherwise, I'm just going to go have pizza later and that's it." There was definitely ■ time where it felt intimidating, like this is the end of punk. This is the end of these things that are not spiritual. And that's another thing with more traditional

experiences and Santería and what I grew up seeing. When you're initiated and your life is just devoted, you could be a musician, you can be an artist.

Ever: You could be anything. There are just things you have to do.

Cristy: I have rituals every Monday. I do the same shit every Friday. There are certain things that I don't feel entitled to do. And then there are things I don't need to do, but then there are things that I just think are disrespectful. If I were to wear certain things...

Ever: Yeah, everything has rite of passage.

Cristy: And it's culture, too. I'm a light skin guanita. The side of my family that raised me was very Spaniard and my great grandma is from Spain. It's like stay in our lanes, talk to the ancestors when they show up. Don't go to el asiento that you're not invited to. It's been really magical to integrate everything. And I definitely understand that I got ■ tarot card reading once from this woman, who's super awesome, and she goes, "Oshun gave you punk." [laughs] No, but it's true. What else would I have done for twenty years? I'm

always like, I would've become ■ surgeon and I would've quit and I would've pursued my music, and here we are. I would've been here talking about quitting being a surgeon I never had ■ *Green Day* zine, and I never got to become their friend.

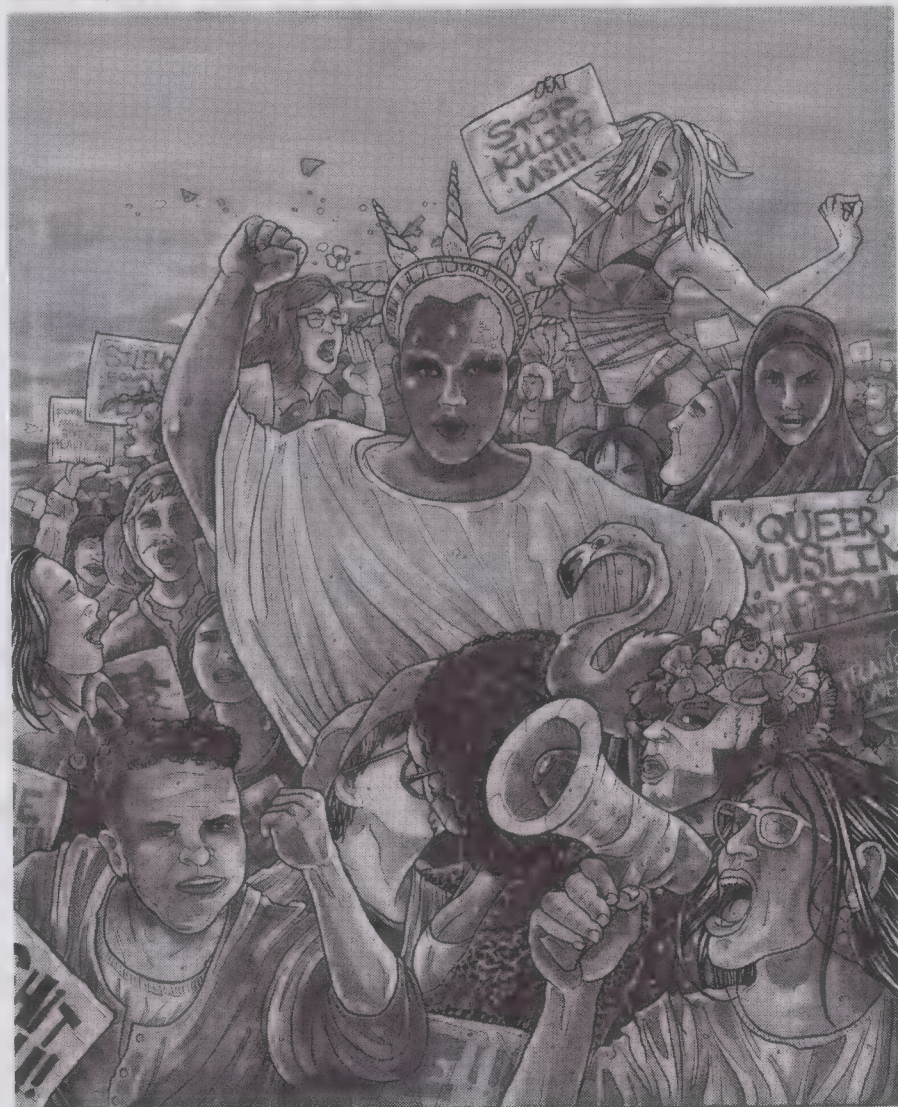
Todd: We don't even know if you'd have been a happy surgeon.

Cristy: I mean, I could have been a surgeon for *Green Day*. [laughs] It's what is meant to be.

Ever: Let's talk about The Homewreckers. I enjoyed watching you guys every time that you played when you were out here.

Cristy: Thank you. The Homewreckers started in 2008. As I mentioned before, I've been writing songs since the '90s, playing folk punk and being crusty, and not playing organized music, just kind of showing up at shows and being like, "I got my acoustic guitar. I'm going to be playing some songs up front." With The Homewreckers it was like, "We're going to book tours and we're going to do shows. We're going to record albums." But in my head I was like, "Let's do this now."

JUSTICE, NEXT WORLD TAROT

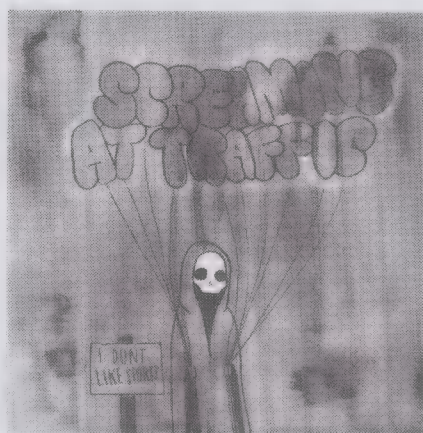




United Snakes EP
Limited Edition 7"

United Snakes is a collaboration between Jordon Joyes, singer songwriter of American Punk/Bluegrass outfit Gallows Bound and Canadian singer, songwriter, Chuck Coles of The Creep Show / Organ Thieves.

Their captivating writing styles, strong vocals, and acoustic melodies blend together seamlessly.



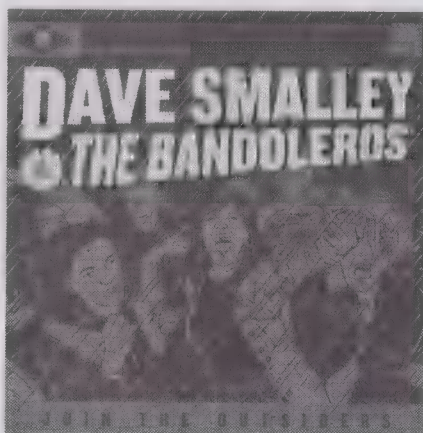
Screaming at Traffic
I Don't Like Sports
Limited Edition of 250

Debut album from the newest Punk Rock Cosmonauts to join Little Rocket Records. Screaming At Traffic from Winnipeg, Mb, Canada, are made up of Jacques Richer, Duncan Murta, Paul Colman, and Stefan St. Godard. Their no-frills emo-punk riffing add to the group's frenzied live performance and raw, yet melodic songwriting.



DL Burdon
The Wind Told The Runaway
Limited Edition of 300

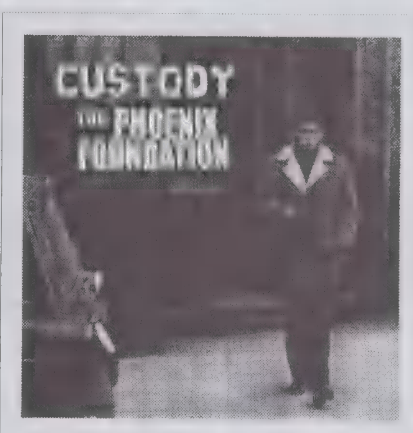
DL Burdon's 2nd full length LP from the Former Cell Mates front man, with contributions from members of Hyde & Beast, The Lake Poets, and Futureheads front man Barry Hyde. Burdon's songwriting has matured into a more classic, timeless direction whilst his live shows still retain the spontaneity and excitement of his punk rock background.



Dave Smalley & The Bandoleros
Join The Outsiders
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Dave Smalley, the legendary punk rock singer (DYS, All, Dag Nasty, Down By Law) has a new band Formed in 2017, Mr. Smalley has united with The Bandoleros, three Spanish guys, and one crazy Argentinian to create 11 solid punk rock hits.

Join the outsiders.



Custody / The Phoenix Foundation
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Custody is back with a sing-a-long track about making songs every Tuesday - treating us to those catchy choruses we've come to know and love.

The Phoenix Foundation's 'Secrets' is a brooding six minutes of emotional punk rock, blending the perfect balance of roughness and poignancy.

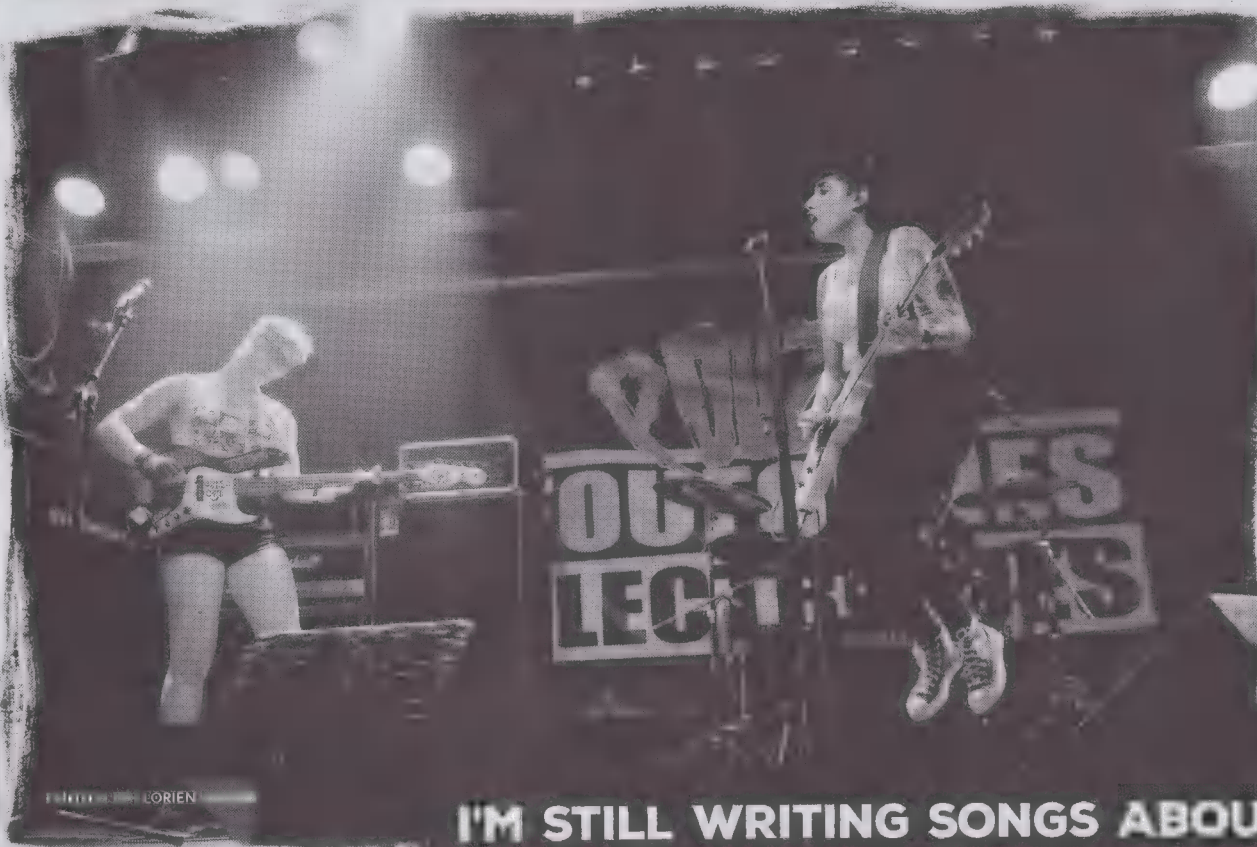


Mean Caesar EP
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Mean Caesar's debut EP deals with London's darker side and personal loss, attaining nosebleed-reaching dimensions. The band proves their punk mastery while retaining all of their raw, buzzed-out power.

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**I'M STILL WRITING SONGS ABOUT
COMPLICATED LOVE, AND
LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP, AND
SPECIAL CONNECTIONS, BUT
DURING THE APOCALYPSE.**

I just was so obsessed with finding love and marriage and having ■ kid. I lost sight of all the magical things that were happening. My favorite story is the day The Homewreckers broke up the first time was the day that this person at Adeline Records, Lorrin, had contacted me saying Billie Joe wanted me to set up a show for Emily's Army—Joey, his kid's old band—and it would be their "New York City punk show." [laughs] And I'm just like, "Whaaattt?!" That's my role? Oh my god. And then The Homewreckers break up. [laughs] So, it's like, it wasn't meant to be, but it was definitely meant to happen.

I'm so proud of the LP we did. We have two 7"s. We did ■ split with City Mouse. We toured out here and we did Awesome Fest and The Fest, and we were so busy for the first three years. Then it just crashed when my ex—who was in the band—left the band. Then the whole band broke up. We took a hiatus and then the second wave of the band just never picked up. We never toured. I was trying to maintain the same lineup, the same people, and we all had different needs. We had all grown up. I started the band with Jay, my very old friend, and we just grew apart with what we wanted, but I didn't want to kick him out and he didn't want to quit.

So we were just like, "You don't want a tour and we don't do fill-ins." We're a family. I didn't see the point in

anything, to be honest. I was just super depressed. I was just, "I'm lonely." But eventually we recorded a full length called *I Statements*. The title comes from this band meeting we had where me and my ex, when we were bandmates, were always fighting. It was drama. The drummer, Crystal, who also was a founding member who's awesome, she left to Asheville during the first breakup. And so we're having this band meeting and I'm crying and we're all just like, "You did it! No, *you* did it!" And then she goes, "I statements, please."

Todd: Counseling.

Cristy: Yeah, I'm very proud of everything we did. It's out there on thehomewreckers.bandcamp.com, and I look back and I'm like, "Fuck, I regret not taking that on." I regret for the Emily's Army show, like, why didn't

we just get a fill-in drummer for that? It was because I was sad 'cause I just got broken up. I just feel like I could never do that again. I will never let my pain go be more important than anything Green Day-related—[laughs]—no, but really, good music opportunities that are going to go off. It was an awesome show. My other band played, I was in a doo-wop band. I played guitar.

Ever: Yes!

Cristy: But it wasn't my band and it was sad. I couldn't put the energy that I would have loved to put into making the flyer, and I feel that way about any show that I ruined because I was sad. I still get sad sometimes, but I just try to not sabotage the Choked Up experience because it's very different. I treat it like I treat my art.

Ever: Let's talk about Choked Up.

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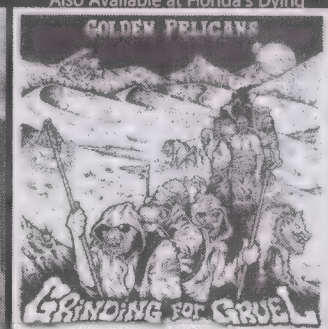
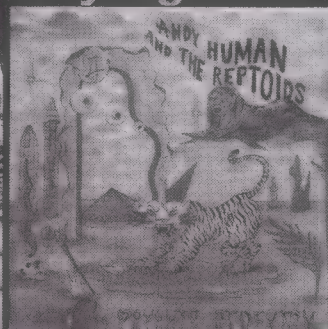
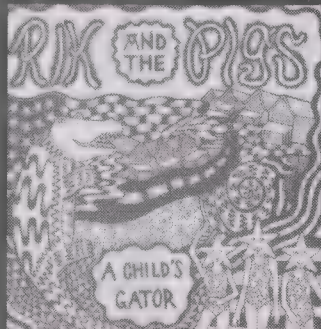
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Cristy: I'm still writing songs about complicated love, and love and companionship, and special connections, but during the apocalypse and during this time. The Homewreckers had a lot of songs about gentrification and falling in love in the city that is falling apart. I write about relationships all the time and they all become these songs about healing and sadness and coexisting in the middle of some dark shit and being there for each other. Choked Up just finished a full length with Mass Giorgini and I'm so excited. We went to Sonic Iguana. We were so proud of the three-part harmonies we wrote, but we wanted somebody who was not gonna let us do whatever the fuck we want, who's like, "That sounds good." We just wanted someone who's going to kick our ass and even recommend things that we would like. And I hate everything. [laughs]

We were going to do a song about colonization and being a person of color in the world, or a song about pot. We have a couple of songs about survival and one of the songs is in Spanish, it's called "Lomas Y Chisme." It's about reclaiming your heart and your power. And then I had this interaction with someone and I just start feeling very intense. Like you know when you get ■ crush on someone, but "I'm going to think about this crush"? But in the context of it being four years from now and wouldn't it be nice if we could know each other when we're less fucked up? I'm very excited about it and we did these crazy harmonies for it. That's what I love about this band—nobody is scared. Like, last minute, oh my god, best opportunity of your life, quit your job. We got to go do this thing now. Everyone's just really stoked to take on whatever happens.

Ever: I felt that at the Hi Hat show. You guys really click and are all happy to be there, it was a lot of fun.

Cristy: Thank you. That's another thing with the tarot deck and with my art—I fund a lot of it. We make money and we fund our things with our money. But I'm so excited to be able to pay for band stuff. Waiting around for ■ label. That's legit. I'm open and we're emotionally available for record labels. [laughs] We're on Get Better Records. They're awesome. We released our EP on them. But yeah, we're talking about



the future. We don't know what's going to happen. We'll see.

Ever: It seems like you guys are touring a lot.

Cristy: We love it out here. Our roadie is from L.A. We played so many different kinds of shows. We'll play a show that's all people of color, all queer, and it's all hardcore bands and us. And then we'll play with different ethnicities and cultures, all white dudes or whatever, but it's ■ pop punk show. It's nice to be able to do everything and it not feel polarizing and weird. Now it just feels like I belong everywhere and we belong everywhere.

Ever: How do you do it all? You have your hands in everything. Do you rest, girl?

Cristy: No, I suck at vacations, unless it's romantic, 'cause then hopefully we're having sex. [laughs] I'm so bad at vacations. I'm like, "Oh, I got to work on ■ song." Or I brought my sketchbook. I don't sketch for fun, but I'm gonna work on this flyer because I don't think the promoter's doing flyers. It's Gemini and it's just workaholic and I've always had a drive to communicate, to do everything, and to be a part of something. There's just always this drive. It feels like

if I go two days without checking emails or starting up ■ new thing—just something on my list that I need to do, or even just practice songs—I just feel terrible.

It's also being aware that my job is freelance illustration. So it's kind of weird to be having this experience of being financially stable off of art and music. I'm super grateful. I feel very blessed and I always want to find ways to share that power and accessibility with other people. I was so obsessive about what I charge and making money up to a couple months ago, and now I'm as excited to do flyers for fun.

Ever: I was thinking about that time I ran into you before your show. It was at the Pulse nightclub vigil in Downtown L.A.

Cristy: That was so sad.

Ever: Yeah, and you said you were going to school for a little bit out here.

Cristy: When I was in school it was weird 'cause I hadn't had a routine with a schedule since 2004. So in 2015—going back to school and having a schedule again—it just so grounding and it felt like when it was over, I cried so much. I was like, "Oh my god, I'm back on this weird life. Have no schedule and no stability."

Ever: Alright Cristy, what is your favorite cartoon and cereal combo?

Cristy: Oh shit, I gotta think. Could it be a cartoon that's exclusively cereal? Or a cereal based on a television cartoon?

Ever: It could be whichever.

Cristy: I love Smacks, the frog. I don't know his name though. I'm such a shitty girlfriend.

Ever: I thought Smacks was his name.

Cristy: Oh, alright. I also really like the Golden Crisp Bear. He was hot.

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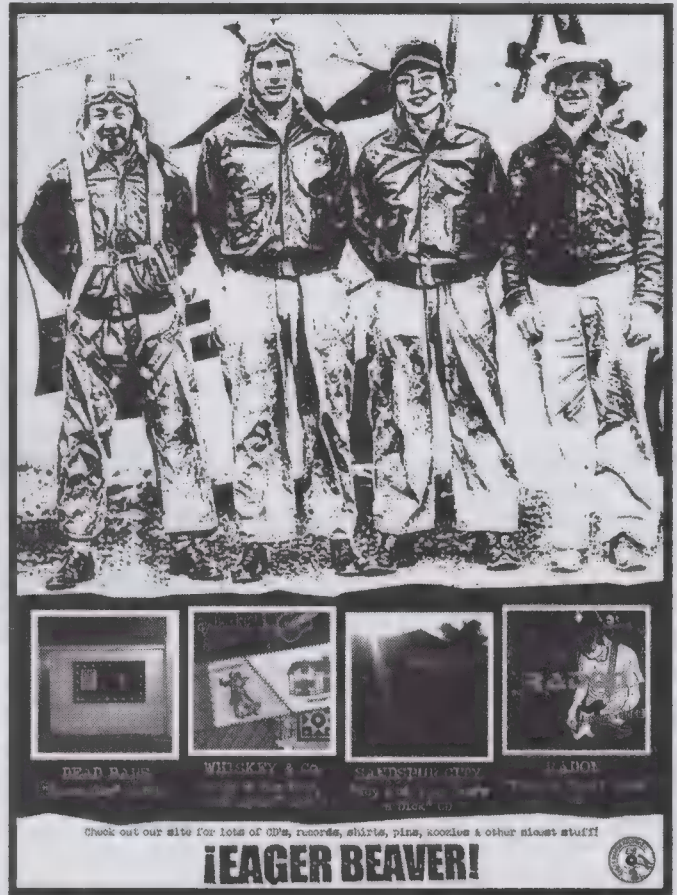
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Todd: He's pretty cuddly.

Cristy: And stoned. [laughs]

Ever: He had a really smooth voice. If you could give fourteen-year-old Cristy Road some advice for the future, what would it be?

Cristy: I would tell her to not do all the stuff we were just talking about in regards to compartmentalizing scenes, 'cause that really fucked me up. It stood in the way of me really embracing everything I loved. It made me feel like, "If I love ska, I can't do this." And you hear of these feuds between bands, or you hear of a band being really fucked up, but you want to keep being ■ part of that community and you don't know how.

When you're young, it's just so scary and weird and you are like, "Am I going to lose all my friends if I really own this value that I have? Or really own this trauma I'm trying to work out?" I just would want her to not give ■ shit about anything and just not care so much about what people think, or of other people's definitions of punk. I made mine and then I went back on what that definition was when I really wanted to cultivate my definition of anarchist, DIY punk. And I was that; that was my life.

But there was so much I cut out and so much that contributed to being in very white, male, crust punk, folk punk scenes where I felt like the conversations on queerness

were difficult—conversations on abuse, conversations on gender, and I just feel like it would have been easier to just be like, "Aw, this folk punk show was really fun, but I'm starting to feel stressed. I'm going to go hang out with my friends who don't like folk punk," you know? "They only listen to Huggy Bear, but they understand me and so I'm going to go there 'cause I feel shitty about this thing." I just did not have that.

I felt like my life was so singular. And it wasn't just me; the people in those scenes did not like each other. I had a couple of friendships end because I became political: "You're not fun anymore." It sucks because it meant not having ■ pop punk band for ten years of my life. But, whatever, I had zines. I had full control. I could do whatever the hell I wanted. That's what zines were there for. I feel ■ little wiser for some reason. I'm thinking that I do all these things because it's a need to communicate, this need to exist in these communities. I used to think it meant by dating someone, or being friends with everyone, or throwing the best potluck once a week and all these things that may create community but may just give me anxiety. Now I'm having a brain fart.

Todd: If I may?

Cristy: Please.

Todd: The punk that I'm exposed to and being part of the creation of, I feel there's a huge sea change happening now where people are genuinely either more open to a lot more diversity in punk or they're getting the fuck out. And I really embraced that and think you are one of the role models for this for showing you were struggling before with things that seemed insurmountable and now are melding together a lot easier. I think it's a good way to reevaluate. So instead of thinking of things on a linear grid, you're like, "Oh that didn't work out, but I can see myself over this wall that I couldn't see over before. Now I can see how all these things come together." And that comes from wisdom. That comes from twenty years of hard work. Sometimes things completely fall apart, and then you just have to come back into it. I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but that's how I see to see.

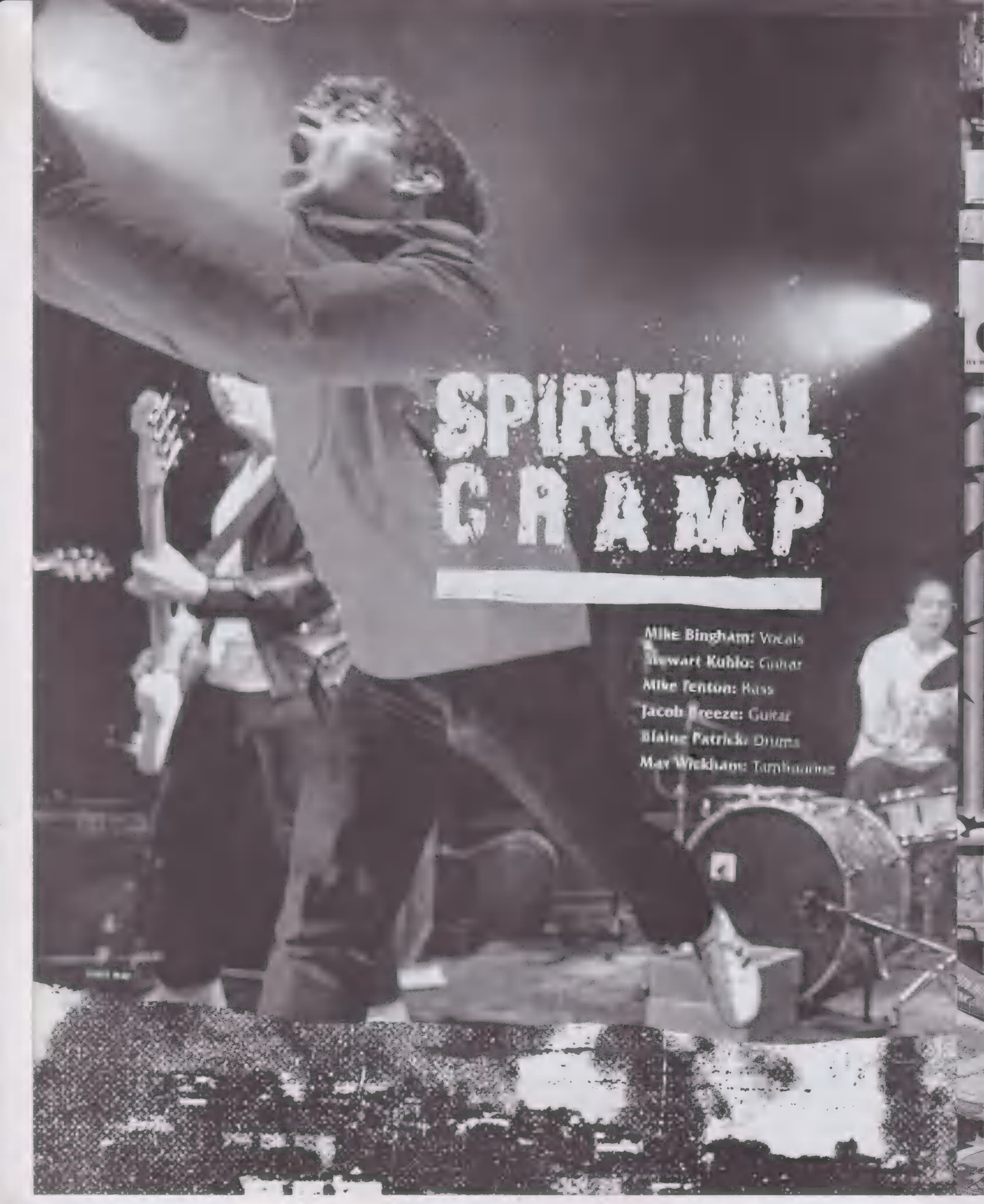
Cristy: Yeah, I appreciate that. It's hard to see.

Ever: Sometimes we don't see ourselves and we just need to have people within our community see us and be vocal.

Cristy: Yeah. Thank you so much.

Ever: Thank you.





SPIRITUAL CRAMP

Mike Bingham: Vocals
Stewart Kublo: Guitar
Mike Fenton: Bass
Jacob Freeze: Guitar
Blaine Patrick: Drums
Max Wickham: Tambourine



It's hard to wax lyrical about fools you see in the bar every week. When they told me they had a band, I rightfully ignored them and got another round in. When I actually listened, I was floored. As my favorite uncle, Steve, said, "This sounds like then... but now." On wax, Spiritual Cramp managed to somehow harness forty years of punk and indie into one cohesive thought: The Ruts, New Order, Talking Heads, Dischord Records, hardcore, new wave. Somehow, through the insane mind of Mike Fenton, they have taken "then" and made it "now." The live shows are incendiary—with Max and Bingham's leaps and the heartfelt trust between them and the audience. They are a bunch of dickheads, but I love them.

Present at Interview: **Max, Stewart, Bingham**

Interview conducted by the YOFC Squad: **Tim, Isaac, Gerard**

Photos by **Chris Bavaria**, chrisbavaria.com & **Senny Mau**, [@simply_senny](https://twitter.com/simply_senny)

Layout by **Eric Baskauskas**

Tim: I'm here at the YOFC headquarters with Spiritual Cramp. Welcome, fellows. You seem to be getting a lot of play these days. I've seen you in *Thrasher* and in some other magazines.

Max: Yeah.

Tim: So you're getting big.

Max and Bingham: I don't know about that.

Tim: You've done tours with American Nightmare, No Warning, Beach Fossils, and Radioactivity. So, you've done tours with "big" bands, right?

Bingham: Yeah.

Tim: Right?

Bingham: Yeah.

Tim: So I'm going to go back to the beginning. For all the readers, everyone's been in a bunch of no-name, hardcore bands.



CHRIS MAHON

I wrote them all down, but actually there's too many to say.

Bingham: That's so funny. It's so true.

Tim: So Max—you were in Face The Rail, Yodaki, Caged Animal. Was that with Tony Molina?

Max: Yeah. It was.

Tim: Fatigue, Primal Rite. Profile, which you forgot to mention.

Max: I did forget to mention.

Bingham: I'm in that band, too.

Tim: Okay, so Bingham's also in... Is that... You still going?

Bingham: Yeah. We're still a band, for sure. We might do an LP.

Max: The LP is written.

Tim: You're all pretty much—apart from Stu—West Coast, right?

Bingham: Yeah.

Max: Definitely.

Tim: Pretty hardcore. Bingham, you're from Santa Rosa?

Bingham: I'm from Santa Rosa.

Tim: Max, San Francisco?

Max: Yeah.

Tim: And then, Blaine's from Marin? So, he's the yuppie of the band?

Bingham: Absolutely.

Max: Blaine was in a pop punk band called the Abi Yoyos. Their record was called *Mill Valley*. It was a nice watercolor painting... a scenic portrait of Mill Valley, I think.

Tim: Oh dear.

Bingham: They had a cult following. They just liked Crimpshrine too much.

Tim: Didn't Blaine go to college for some magic shit?

Max: The way I understood it, is he was on a weird scholarship for either video gaming, or he was on a magic team or something like that.

Bingham: I had no idea about that.

Max: Yeah. It was some real-deal blonde shit.

Bingham: Cool. Yeah. That's blonde. We call them blonde.

Max: Him and Stu on tour, they just...

Bingham: They play magic....

Max: *Magic The Gathering*. Not even playing it. They look at videos of other people playing it.

Bingham: And KeyForge, too...

Max: There was a night in a San Diego hotel where we played KeyForge until 5:00 in the morning.

Bingham: I had to tell them to go in the other room, because the sound of cards slapping the table was too loud.

Max: And we were under the influence of a bunch of different stuff. Just listening to people play KeyForge.

Tim: Wait, you take drugs and also play magic cards?

Bingham: Yeah. It's like a culmination of a couple of different styles.

Tim: It looks like a lot of you guys came off the back of hardcore bands. How come this band is not a hardcore band?

Bingham: The band I was in before this one wasn't a hardcore band. I've never really played hardcore fulltime. I've always had a band that's something weird. That's kind of been my style. Creative Adult, we played for five years, and it was post-punk shit. I like playing in post-punk bands. I like playing in hardcore bands, too.

Tim: With this band, did you make point of a sound? Did you sit down and say, "I'm going to do this"?

Bingham: Mike Fenton, the bass player, writes all the music, and he said, "Yo, I have these five songs. They kind of sound like this, this, and this. We should try doing a band around it." And, he sent me the demo and it was a reggae... like a ska song. And I was like, "Yo, this is really weird. I don't know if this is cool." 'Cause I was going to play guitar for it, and our friend Nick was going to sing for it, right?

Max: That's right.

Bingham: And then I was, "Well, I could try to do vocals." Then I went and recorded vocals on the demos.

Max: I'm glad you decided to do vocals.

Bingham: When I recorded the vocals for the demos, everyone was like, "You should sing for the band."

Tim: You're really a guitar player, right?

Bingham: Yeah. Every band I've ever been in, I played guitar. Well, I sang in No Sir, which is how I met Max.

Max: That wasn't a hardcore band. That sounded straight up like Jesus Lizard.

Bingham: I think Profile's the only real hardcore band.

Tim: You all seem to have very open tastes—and Max growing up in the Bay Area, which seemed very “scene” driven.

Bingham: Yeah, I'd say so. When I met Max, I remember being like, “Oh, I'm friends with all the San Francisco punks now.”

Max: Mike caught me at a time where I was starting to play hardcore. For the previous ten years, I was playing stuff that was influenced by Lip Cream, crasher crust like Life, or anything on Hardcore Holocaust. I ate up World Burns To Death in 2004, 2005. I loved bands like Deadfall, and Stockholm Syndrome I thought was fantastic. But as far as open tastes, I was like every other kid from thirteen to sixteen, where I was like, “I'm only going to listen to punk from 1979 to 1985,” 'cause everything beyond that is garbage, and I don't have time for that.

Tim: Is it also just the access to information? **Bingham:** Back then, it was totally different.

Max: The turning point was I lived by this huge record seller in North Beach. It just said “Records.” They had about 50,000 records down there. You could get an LP for four dollars and a 7” for a dollar. And, if you dug long enough, you could find gems. I found the first Crucifix 12”—which is a hundred dollar record—and I got it for five bucks. That really opened it up. By the time I was sixteen, I saw all these kids who were with flip hats, which I was wearing. I was like, “This is garbage. Why are you limiting yourself?” I got really into blues and Stevie Ray Vaughan, just anything that wasn't punk. For a couple of years, I refused to listen to punk. Oh, but I was still playing in punk because I had no friends, and that's how I made my friends.

Tim: When I listen to you, I hear loads of different influences. I hear The Ruts from the '70s, and then I hear some later dub reggae stuff, and I hear The Clash, and I hear power pop, and new hardcore. Was that something that you guys thought: “Okay, we're going to try to transcend different sounds?”

Stuart: I feel like it's a credit to Mike Fenton because Mike Fenton lives up in the North Bay. Way, way, way north, and kind of remote. He's not really plugged in to exactly what's happening in popular culture.

Bingham: Everyone else lives in the city. We all see each other all the time. Mike lives really secluded,

Stuart: It lets him do his thing. And I think this is the type of music that he likes.

Bingham: He knows what he's doing. When I go and sing on it, I'm like, “Okay, this music's crazy. I want to bring out a hardcore vibe to it.” I want people to be like, “That guy acts like a hardcore singer.” 'Cause that's where we're from. Even though I just said I've never really played a lot of hardcore bands... my whole life I've gone to hardcore shows, so that's all I know.

Tim: I love seeing photos posted of you guys when you're on tour, as you guys

have gotten more comfortable on stage. Especially, I think you and Max are breaking out with insane jumps. Best hardcore jumps. Softest band.

Bingham: That's all we know... do cool jumps. You know what I mean? Hardcore style.

Tim: Do you feel—and this is getting in pretty deep to it—you sort of transcended the punk band thing to be an indie band, in a way? Was this a conscious decision?

Bingham: No.

Tim: “We're not gonna play tiny venues. We want to play bigger venues, so we're going to be more accessible.”

Max: I think it happened organically. I don't think it was an intentional thing. I think the thing that made it special was we had all gone through the ringer of punk and hardcore and stuff like that, and we were all in a place where we felt comfortable just playing what we want to play, because that's what we want to play. Obviously, it's going to sound a little punk, but it's going to sound a little like The Clash and a little like the Talking Heads, because we listened to that, too. It's easily one of the most organic bands I've ever been a part of.

Bingham: It's natural.

Max: The only reason we started doing those bigger venue shows is because we got asked. Not to toot our own horn, but I think people recognize when a band is happy with themselves, as opposed to when a band is portraying themselves as the best thing in the world and just grinding hard at trying to be that. Spiritual Cramp is happy being themselves.

Bingham: We haven't intentionally been like, “Okay, we need to pinpoint this indie market.” Those Beach Fossils guys, they were like, “Yo, you guys rock. You guys want to play shows?” And, we were like, “Yeah, tight.”

Tim: This didn't come from a booking agent?

Max and Bingham: We're one hundred percent DIY.

Max: We pay for all of our own shit. We book all of our own tours.

Max: We do everything ourselves.

Bingham: We do have friends who look out for us.

Tim: But don't pay some dude to get you on the tour?

Max: No. I don't think we've transcended, because I still think people get confused. I still think sometimes we play shows, and we were too punk for the hardcore kids, too hardcore for the punk kids, and too aggressive for the indie kids. You know what I mean? There are people in the audience who really dig it, but I also think there are people who are just, “I'm at an indie show.”

Tim: It was interesting watching The Fillmore show (famous San Francisco venue). When you played, it was full and all the eyeballs were on you guys, but I looked to the people in the crowd—this was the Beach Fossils and Wavves—lots of people didn't know what you guys were.

Bingham: They're not like, “Oh, this guy's trying to sound like David Byrne.” They don't know that. You know what I mean?

They don't think, “Oh, but they're doing hardcore moves. He's doing Bold jumps.” They just think, “Whoa. Crazy.”

Tim: Is that weird for you, to be in a world where they don't understand what you're doing?

Bingham: No, because we take advantage of it. People dig it. When we play, we project a really inclusive vibe. I try to speak on stage and be like, “Yo, welcome, feel comfortable.”

Max: Seeing the people who for the first few songs are like, “What the hell is this?,” and, by the fourth song they were kind of dancing—that was the fun part about the American Nightmare Tour. We'd get on, and for the first song or so, people were like, “Huh?” And then you'd start to see their heads start to move, and that was really great.

That's not the weird part. The weird part for me is playing shows where there are that many people, and you can't shake everyone's hand. It's not a small punk show where there are fifty people and you know most of them. Even though you're playing on this big-shit stage, you find yourself fighting for that space, which is something that I never had to do at like a show at Hazmat or Burnt Ramen, 'cause that space is everybody's.

Tim: Bingham, you write the lyrics, right? You do a lot of stuff that's very specifically San Francisco-based, right?

Bingham: Yeah. I just try to write about my experiences.

Tim: But then, also when you're on a big stage, you're telling people, “It's okay to not feel great.”

Bingham: Absolutely. We live in this world where everyone is projecting this self image, where everything is like, “Yo, check it out. Everything's good for me. Everything's great,” and it's like, “Yo man, I'm thirty-one years old. By all definitions you could say, ‘Yeah, Mike's doing pretty well.’” We—all of us—deal with anxiety, depression, and really sad, fucked up shit. And I feel like there's a

**I've always had
a band that's
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That's kind of
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huge disconnect. It seems like everyone out there is just doing fine, and you're at home by yourself feeling bad. I feel that a lot. I feel like to write good lyrics, you have to be honest. You can't bullshit people. So I just try to be as honest as humanly possible. It's like, "Yo man, you might think it's really good for me. It's not."

Tim: It's interesting to see you make a point of that vulnerability live. Looking from the outside in, the way that the band presents themselves, you come out, you're pretty banging, you're on it, you're getting into it, but then you have this break where you're like, "Yo, I don't always feel great. And if you don't feel great, that's okay." And, not many people do that because it's like breaking the fourth wall.

Bingham: Breaking character. There's no way I'm the only person who feels like this all the time.

Tim: You're being honest. There are a lot of people who aren't being honest about their feelings.

Bingham: Right. There's no way, "It's all good." It's not all good.

Max: It's social media, man. You're not going to post yourself crying in the corner on Instagram with snot coming down your nose and a fucking knife next to you 'cause you want to stab yourself. You're going to post, fucking, a peace sign in front of a waterfall. Being like, "Yo, what's up? I'm traveling." But there's also the other side of that world. People are okay and they try to pretend they're fucked up.

Bingham: Right, right, right.

Max: It's like sixteen-year-old kids being like, "I have anxiety." It's like, "You might, but..."

Bingham: Just wait. It gets so much worse.

Stuart: Even thirty-year-olds try to portray this image of being these tortured artists. How Mike writes lyrics is, "I have my own shit that I've struggled with my whole life." What he writes speaks to me, and I think I'm not wondering where my next meal is coming from, but certainly struggle with shit like mental health all the time. It's just super real and he's speaking truth to reality.

Bingham: I want everyone who sees us to feel safe with us, you know what I mean? I don't want anyone to be like, "Yo, that guy thinks he's so cool." I just want people to be like, "That guy just talked about something that I deal with every day, and he seems really cool."

Tim: Did you get Max to play tambourine because you ran out of instruments, and then were just suddenly like, "Fuck. We really want Max in the band, and now what are we going to do?"

Bingham: Dude, okay. No... Well, yes... Yes and no. Yes, because it's always sick to throw Max in whatever band you're in. But also, it's cool. We did it just once as kind of a fun thing and it made it so much more cracking.

Tim: It makes the band, but it's an interesting thing to be like, "Yo, you can just fucking—I don't know—play tambourine or something?"

for a couple of years, I refused to listen to punk, but I was still playing in punk because I had no friends.

Max: I went and visited them. They were recording their demo and I was just sold instantly. I was like, "This band is the best band." I don't remember hearing something that I liked more than this in a long time, and they needed somebody to play tambourine on a song. And I was like, "I'll do it."

Tim: Wait, wait. Before you get there, what was your history of tambourine playing?

Max: Zero.

Bingham: That's a great question.

Tim: Right. So you're like, "But, if you need someone to play tambourine, I'm your man."

Max: Well, yeah. And, I certainly learned that it is in the instrument.

Bingham: It's definitely in the instrument.

Max: And so transitioning from eighth notes to sixteenth notes, where I really risk using my wrist. That was... it took a second to learn.

Bingham: It's your off wrist.

Max: I was so into this band and Mike, eventually, was like, "Whoa, why don't you just play with us?"

Bingham: He played our third show with us. We'd played two shows before, and then the third one, I was like, "Yo, just come to the show tonight. Play tambo while we rip, and it will be fun." At that set there was an energy that wasn't there before, and I was like, "Oh shit, this is way sicker." It just became...

Max: A thing.

Bingham: Yeah. It was like, "Oh cool. This is the way it should be."

Tim: But, the energy is huge because of it.

Max: I just remember being stoked that I was included. It was more of a very heavy friendship moment.

Bingham: Yeah. Super friendship.

Max: You're including me. Not only are you asking me to play with your band, you're asking me to go on tour with you. You're buying my plane tickets to go on tour with you. I'm a member of this band. It's not one of those things where it's like, "You can come with us, if you want, but..."

Tim: Cut to, I'm playing tambourine during ■ No Warning breakdown.

Max: Yes. Yes.

Bingham: That was so sick.

Max: No Warning asking me to play tambourine with them on stage, which is the coolest. It's one of those things you never forget.

Tim: So my question about neck tattoos is...

Bingham: Am I the only one?

Max: Yeah.

Tim: Bingham's the only one in the band who has neck tattoos. My question is, should you finish the rest of your body before you get neck tattoos?

Bingham: No, it depends on what your style is. If you want that real shady tweaker style, no. Get neck tattoos off top, which is what I did.

Tim: Well, I would agree. If I could go back in time, I would go straight for the neck.

Bingham: See, that's the thing—as a guy who did that, I would go back in time and finish my body first.

Max: There was this guy in this really pogo pop punk band who I won't name, but they stayed at my house ten years ago, and the only tattoos he had was a tattoo on his head. It was "Born to die in the gutter." On his forehead.

Tim: Right. Sorry, you just said, "I won't name him."

Bingham: Yeah, you just named him.

Max: Then a tattoo on his neck and two tattoos on his hands. The reason I know it is 'cause I was living with Daiki at the time. We all went out to get food and we came back. Homie was naked in Daiki's room, having sex with this woman he picked up on tour the day before, and it was just the neck, forehead, hands and nothing else. We saw it, it was just super awkward, and the guy is a chode.

Tim: That goes into the next thing. Who is the best at fighting?

Bingham: Me.

Tim: You think? Okay, so Bingham.

Max: It's either you, or... Blaine's got a lot of size.

Bingham: Yeah. I've never seen Blaine fight.

Stuart: He's like 6'2".

Tim: This leads me into the story of Max. Halloween. So I want Max to just tell me the Halloween story.

Max: I was eighteen. I was living with Randy and Jake from Face The Rail, and our friend Pat Murphy. They grew up in this hick town south of here, right outside of Half Moon Bay. We dressed up for Halloween. We go to this frat party on 18th and Geary and we're all just fucking wasted at the end of the night.

Tim: What are you dressed up as?

Max: I was a banana for three years because I'm lazy and I don't like Halloween. We go to this party and get wasted, and we leave. There's ten of us. We're eighteen years old, wasted drunk. So it's not "Have a good time, we're thirty" drunk. We're outside waiting for the bus and the bus isn't coming. So Jake decides to walk from 18th and Gary all the way back to 42nd and Ortega, which takes an hour. There's nine of us. One of our friends is fat Elvis, and he's just shaking his fat Elvis tummy at cars driving by on Geary Boulevard. And this car just swerves off the road. These two guys come out and they're just like, "What the fuck are you doing?"

I'm also living with Patty from War Crime, this small little SF Irish kid who plays Irish music to make money. And, he just starts yelling expletives at these people. "Fuck you. You're not from here," just

saying horrible shit. And they decided to fight us. There's nine of us and two of these dudes. They proceed to beat us horribly. We're going in waves, like it's ■ D-Day. Three of us go up to try to fight these guys and they break a nose. Randy loses a tooth, and just blood everywhere. I get hit and I'm bloody. I'm puking on my banana costume. Three of us go back to rest while another three go up and try to fight these guys. And it goes on for way too long, like ten minutes. We're not giving up because we're so drunk and they just have a beat on us.

Tim: They just keep it coming.

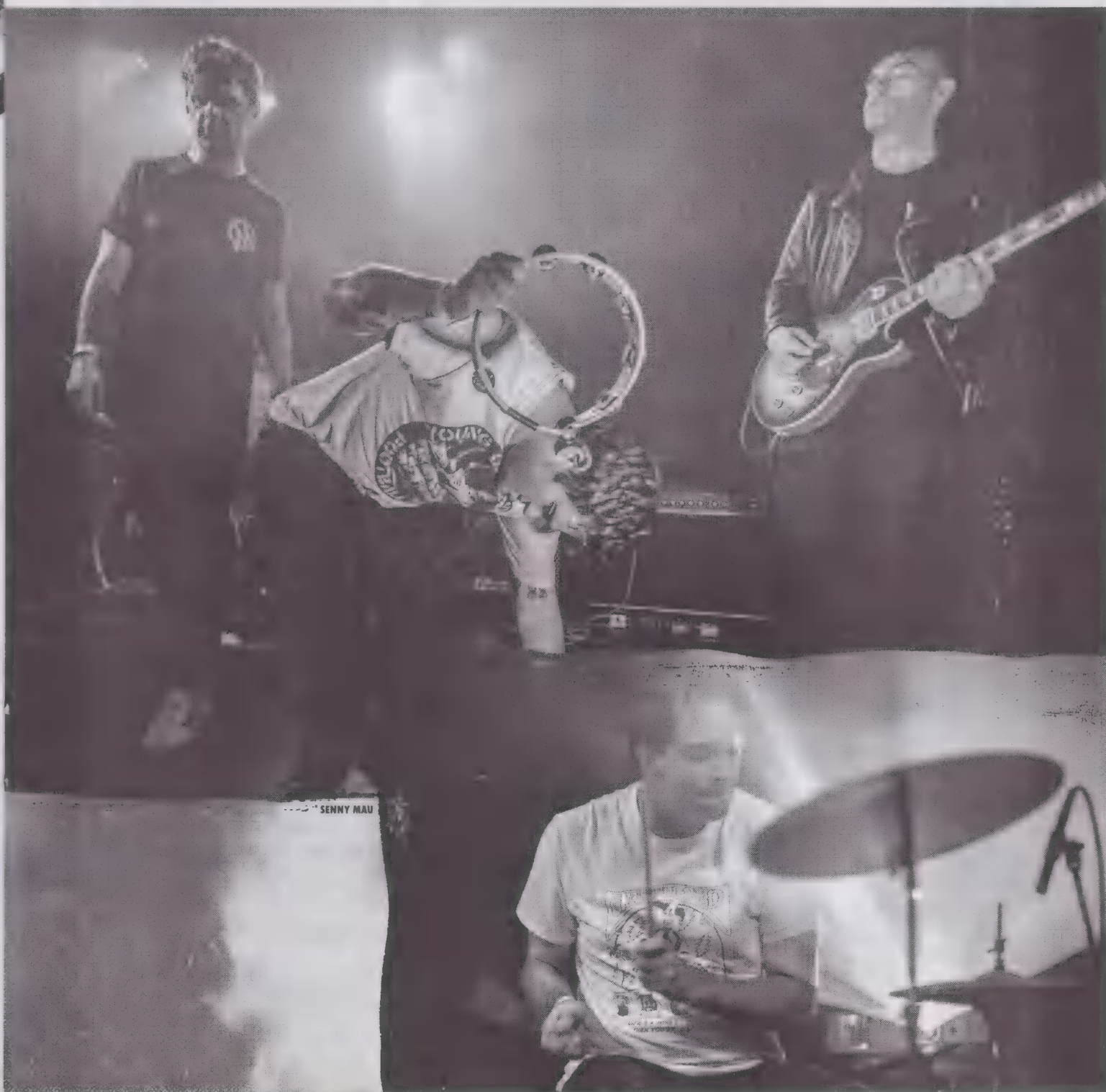
Stuart: At any point were you guys, "Maybe we should all go at the same time?"

Max: No, because we were too tired and drunk. "This is the only way... this will work." And finally, at the end of it, like some beautiful Lord of the Rings montage, Gandalf coming out to the battlefield and saving everyone, we hear Jake's car come to ■ screeching halt in the middle of Geary Boulevard. He gets out and he goes, "What the fuck?" By himself, just grabs them by the hair and is just beating them, doing the job nine other people couldn't do.

He's like, "Get in the car." We're bleeding all over the car. Randy's puking and he's missing

a tooth. He's yelling at Pat, going through where Park Presidio connects 19th, like that. Randy's like, "Fuck you, Pat." He opens up the sliding door and is trying to push Pat out of the car, 'cause he blames him for everyone getting beat up. It's wild, man. And that's it.

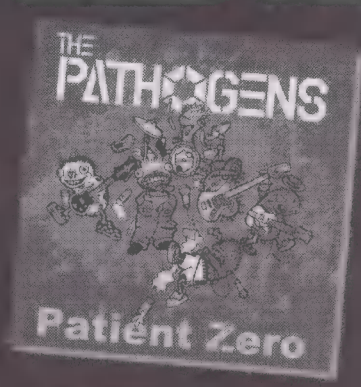
Earlier that night, this lady came up to me—and I was a late bloomer, wearing a banana costume—she's like, "If you do the peanut butter jelly time dance, I will make out with you." And, instead of doing it, I was like, "I'm not your fucking monkey," and just threw my beer down and walked away. I was a fucking dumb kid, man. I hate myself.



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the dumpies

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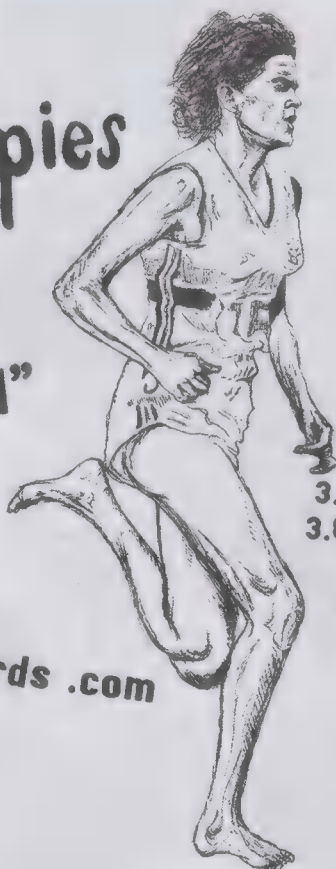


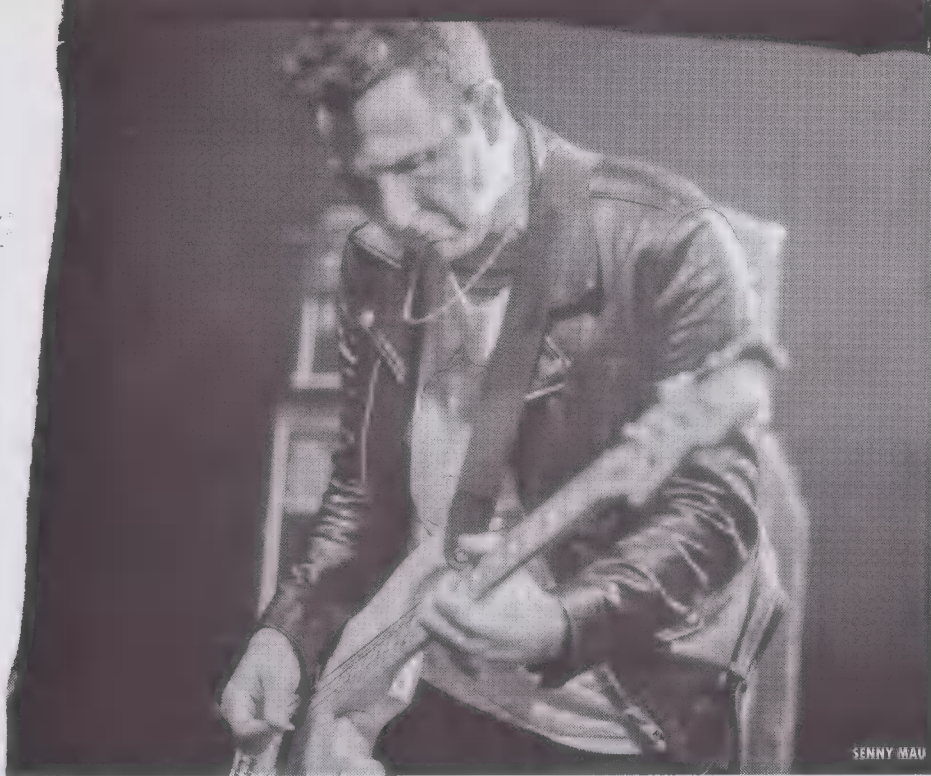
the dumpies

SE Asia Tour 2019

- 2.27 Hanoi, Vietnam
- 2.28 Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 3.2 Bangkok, Thailand @ The Overstay
- 3.3 Saigon, Vietnam
- 3.6 Saigon, Vietnam @ Soma Art Lounge
- 3.8 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia @ Rumah Api
- 3.10 Malacca, Malaysia @ The Key
- 3.11 Batu Pahat, Malaysia @ The Wall
- 3.13 Hanoi, Vietnam @ Solist Pub

the dumpies.com





Tim: Well, the thing is, I actually only did this interview to hear that story. I also want to talk about the production on your records, because it seems like you guys really focus on it.

Bingham: Yeah, totally. That's a big part of it. The sound of it. There's Dead Boys recordings—those old snares. There's no room mics, except on the choruses. But it's all really closed in on the snares really loud. There's no resonance. It's just going snap, like all those GBH recordings. Almost like a lot of those Discharge recordings. The snares.

Max: I just want to give another shout out to Mike Fenton here. He just has a vision.

Tim: Does he control the recording?

Bingham: Oh yeah. He produces everything.

Max: He's not a dictator by any means. Mike gives him a lot of notes, and he's open to feedback. But he just knows what he wants.

Bingham: For the drums and the bass, he mics it... Him and Grace, the woman who engineers the records and mixes them.

Max and Bingham: Yeah. Shoutout, Grace.

Bingham: They communicate. They know what it's supposed to sound like. They do it. I'll chime in a lot with guitars. Like, "Yo, this should sound like a chainsaw." We're really big into production.

Tim: There's obviously someone in the band who has deconstructed those old records sound-wise.

Bingham: Yeah, that's Mike.

Tim: "I want it to sound like this."

Bingham: Yeah.

Tim: My Uncle Steve is sixty-one years old. Shoutout, Uncle Steve. His favorite band is the Marked Men. He loves them to death.

He grew up listening to music from the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s to now. And, when he listened to your record, he said it transcended time. It could be from anywhere, at any time.

Bingham: Yeah.

Tim: I agree with him, because I've put the record on, I've taken it off, put something else on, and thought, "Where are they taking that from?" Are you taking it from 1977? 1984? 1994? Like, you were talking about Talking Heads—or New Order, or Joy Division, or Christian Death? The Ruts? The Clash? Someone must have listened to those records and said, "I want a sound like this."

Bingham: Mike and Max are both neck and neck for being students of actual music. I'm the least studious, as far as the arts go. I hear something and I'm really impulsive, whereas Max and Mike, they have everything cataloged in their heads.

Stuart: Everybody in the band, I'm always impressed with their abilities. But Mike Fenton is on a next level. He's just an incredible musician and he has a vision. He knows exactly what he wants.

Tim: Right. I know your band really well, but I never met the guy who sort of runs the band and he doesn't seem super interested in being part of...

Bingham: He's not a part of the social part. I do the art. Stuart does a lot of the management, the business. Stuart and I do that together. Mike doesn't want to do that part of it.

He wants to write songs and be like, "Can you do something cool?" and Stuart and I are like, "Yeah, we can do something cool." Mike's the best. You got to crack him open a little bit. He's very quiet.

Tim: Is that what makes a band really special? Having different personalities?

Bingham: If everyone does their job really well and the director is doing a good job of directing...

Tim: If it's cohesive...

Stuart: You just gotta know your role, be humble about it, and be excited to contribute the things you can contribute. This is my first band. I'm fucking thirty-five years old. So I don't have any right to say, "Hey, I wrote this song," because I don't write songs, but here are things that I do and I can fill a role. You surround yourself with people that are complementary to what you do, and then you can be successful.

Bingham: You trust them and you appreciate them.

Tim: So do you think that's why you guys are working so well, because you have people who are really good at certain things?

Bingham: Yeah. And it's defined. It's not some weird unspoken thing.

Tim: What does Max do?

Bingham: Provides unending moral and emotional support.

Tim: See? That's the thing—you can't deny the importance of spiritual and emotional support.

Bingham: 'Cause bands get destroyed. It can suck really bad. Tour can suck. You can have these weird interpersonal dynamics going on.

Tim: If it's done right, it just feels like friends hanging out. If it's done wrong, it feels like you're in a relationship with five shitty girlfriends.

Bingham: We feel like we're all really still friends hanging out.

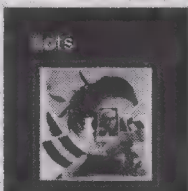
Max: It's one of those rare occasions where it's the right mixture of people. Everyone

CHRIS BAVARIA

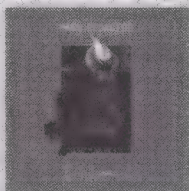


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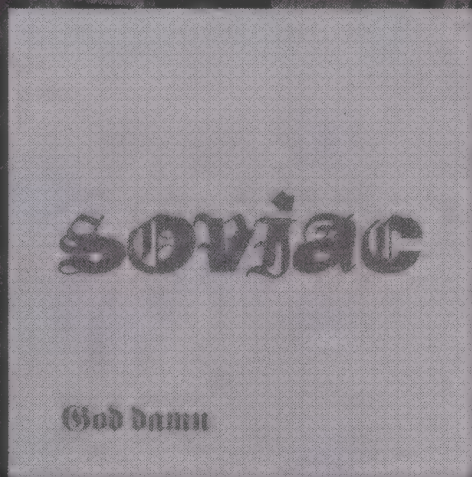
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puts forward an emotional puzzle piece that fits. Even when they're acting like dog shit, it's okay because everyone else can come around and be like, "Okay, we can focus this out and keep going. It's okay." Because everyone fits.

Bingham: It works well and that translates to people, which I think is possibly the reason we've gotten cool opportunities for the first year of our band. Stuart and I talk about the fact that if we lose that, if that goes away, we're just going to break up.

Stuart: We're not going to force it.

Bingham: No, because it won't keep going over well. That's the reason people like it, I think. It's 'cause it really is cool, and if it becomes uncool, we're just going to be, "Cool. Peace."

Stuart: I want to give credit to Mike here for being a connector of people. The folks who are in this band are in this band because of Mike and their connection to him. He's the center of the constellation and I think that's super important. It comes back to the stuff that he talks about, that he sings about, that's real. We all suffer from our own issues. I have mental illness, and I deal with that. When you're in a van with somebody for two or three weeks at a time with no breaks, you've got to rely on the bonds and the belief that shit's working. It's gotta be authentic, and it's got to be honest because nobody's doing this for their health.

Tim: Right.

Max: This isn't healthy.

Tim: We've all been in shitty-ass, fucking hardcore bands, playing in basements. Is there something else?

Bingham: That's a great question. I think that as a band, the end goal is keep doing cool shit. We played the Fillmore two nights in a row. I want to keep doing things like that because it's fun.

Tim: Is there a point that someone says, "Let's stop working, guys"?

Bingham: If we can do that without losing the thing we were just talking about, for sure.

Tim: Is everyone in, though?

Max: Under the right circumstances.

Bingham: Yeah. All of us.

Max: I'm pretty happy. There's a jump there, 'cause once you start doing it, you're on tour for seven, eight months.

Tim: But are you willing to do the grind?

Max: I'm willing to grind it out.

Bingham: And navigating the grind.

Tim: In fairness, anyone can play the tambourine. I'll fucking show up. I'll fucking go.

Max: Dude, your knees, man.

Tim: The fucking old knees. I'm not jumping as high, but I'm still going.

Max: We played forty shows last year.

Tim: Are any of you jaded towards San Francisco?

Bingham: Hell no.

Max: I'm completely not jaded on SF. I'm disappointed and angry. There's a difference. I'm not giving up. I look at what SF has to offer and I want to fucking vomit. It's not dangerous anymore and that's because of gentrification. There are no warehouse spots to play. There are no venues where there's no security. It reflects in the music, because the music being produced in SF has gone from What Happens Next? or Stockholm Syndrome—not that everyone in that band was from SF...

Tim: 650.

Max: Stuff that was really fast, really aggressive, and really spoke to it. I got into punk because I was afraid of people beating me up in school for being a punk. You know what I mean? I found these spaces that were violent and reflected how I felt on the inside, and it doesn't seem like people are that afraid in SF anymore.

Bingham: No.

Max: So they're not making aggressive, violent music. And that's a bummer.

Tim: We used to go to Mission Records where we would have bands from all over the world and it was sketchy and scary and violent.

Max: And people were smoking heroin up in that joint. Not that I advocate for that, but it's just that level of there are no rules. You make your rules.

Tim: It's our world.

Max: Yeah. It's my world.

Tim: So on the new record, you do the Sex

Pistols, right? And that seems the strangest cover to me.

Bingham: They're such a cool art project. Totally curated.

Tim: Yeah. They were a boy band.

Bingham: It's a boy band. And it's awesome. It's really brilliant. And the songs are cool and wild and the lyrics are insane.

Tim: But of all the bands you can pick...

Bingham: It was punk, man.

Tim: And the other one, Billy Bragg.

Bingham: That's my man right there. It's such a beautiful song. When I first heard that song, I listened to it over and over and over again. That whole record.

Tim: Are you trying to be deliberately obtuse...

Bingham: No, no.

Tim: ...by songs you're picking?

Bingham: Well, Blaine actually suggested the Pistols cover. He was like, "Dude, how good is this song?" He started screaming the lyrics in my face, and I was like, "Yeah. It's pretty good."

Tim: You could have done a million songs.

Bingham: As far as that song, I was like, "Dude, it'd be so cool to cover a Billy Bragg song. That's really beautiful, and the lyrics are really thoughtful." I wasn't trying to be obtuse at all. And I like the style. I want that to represent it.

Bingham: We came in and recorded it, so we took it back. We did that one way before. And then when we did the actual *Television* sessions, which is only four songs.

Tim: All right, I shut it down.

Bingham: Right. That was cool.



I don't think we're transcribed, because I still think people get confused.



TOP 5s

Art Ettinger

- Condor, *Singles 2017-2018* LP
- ANTISEEN, *Live in Japan* LP
- Drunk Buseys, *Mad at Everything* CD
- The Shutouts, *Everything*
- The Briefs, *Platinum Rats* LP

Bill Pinkel

- Hidden Spots, *New Me / New You* LP
- Steve Adamyk, *Paradise* LP
- Pup, *Morbid Stuff* LP
- Tiltwheel and Frankie Stubbs, live by ■ pool in Vegas
- Tony Molina and Culture Abuse, live in L.A.

Chris Mason

1. Hidden Spots, *New Me, New You*
2. Corner Boys, *Waiting for 2020*
3. Daydream, Self-titled
4. Martha, *Love Keeps Kicking*
5. Amyl And The Sniffers, Self-titled

Chris Terry

- Full Sun, *Thinkin' About It* LP
- Lest We Forget / Turn It Around East Bay punk comps
- Jai Paul, *Leak 04-13 (Bait Ones)* LP
- Koffee, *Rapture* EP
- Xetas, *The Tower* LP

Craven Rock

1. Sharkpact, Mala Fides, Second Narrows, Brutal Poodle at Nate and Robin's wedding, Vancouver, B.C.
2. *Raw Deal* by Joey Alone (zine)

3. John Waters interviewed by David Schmader at Town Hall
4. *Kneel to the Rising Sun* by Erskine Caldwell (book)
5. Calm., *Things I Learned While Dying in Denver*

Daryl Gussin

- Martha, *Love Keeps Kicking* LP, tie with Steve Adamyk Band, *Paradise* LP
- Soul Glo LP
- The Fleshies, *Introducing The Fleshies* LP
- Clowns, *Nature / Nurture* LP
- That seitan BBQ sandwich I had at The Owlery in Bloomington, Ind.

Dayna Castillo

1. Amyl And The Sniffers, Self-titled
2. Hexdebt, *Rule of Four*
3. Shrimpwitch, *Gave Me the Itch*
4. Alien Nosejob, *Buffet Is Love*
5. Ausmuteants, *...Present the World in Handcuffs*

Designated Dale

1. L7, *Scatter the Rats* LP—L7 delivers yet again as they have the last thirty-plus years. My fellow Angelenos done good, real good.
2. Pat Todd & the Rankoutsiders, *The Past Came Callin'* LP—If you're already familiar with Pat's band and his incredible endeavors with The Lazy Cowgirls, this is absolute no-brainer. If you're not? Ooof, you've got ■ shitload of catching up to do, friends. Real-deal rock'n'roll to live by.

3. Jesus & The Dinosaurs—One hell of a great live band I had the pleasure of catching recently, and hope y'all can too.

4. Exploring and scaling to the top of the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacán, roughly twenty-five miles outside of Mexico City. And you thought I only went to the DF for the food (I can't lie, that was also part of the reason).
5. A's BBQ of East Los Angeles. Traditional BBQ with ■ Mexican imprint that will sock you between the eyes. Quote Leonard Washington: "Alan Cruz's ribs are the goddamn devil!"

Eric Baskauskas

- Summer Lovin'*
- Pelican, *Nighttime Stories*
 - Fried Egg, *Square One*, plus live in Milwaukee at X-Ray Arcade and Chicago at Margaritaville
 - Emma Ruth Rundle, *On Dark Horses*
 - Halshug, *Sort Sind*
 - Typeset in the *Future: Typography and Design in Science Fiction Movies* by Dave Addey (book)

Jimmy Alvarado

- Blindspotting (film)
- Channel 3, *The Bellwether* EP
- Lifters, *Are You Ready for the Good Life* single
- Mala Vista, Self-titled EP
- Radwaste, *End Times Mix Tape* LP

Juan Espinosa

- Soul Glo LP
- Maze 12"

- Mortician, *Chainsaw Dismemberment 2 x LP* reissue
- Game, *No One Wins* LP
- Full Of Hell, *Weeping Choir* LP

Kayla Greet

1. Seeing The Fleshies three times! Tacoma! Seattle! Portland!
2. Kyle Kinane at the Tacoma Comedy Club
3. Dead Bars record release show with Ramona, Orquestra Guitarrística, and 3 Fingers at The Kraken, Seattle.
4. Moving back to Seattle again. Thanks John Maiello for the new spot!
5. Nightmarathons, Choke the Pope, Bobcat, and Erodium at Victory Lounge, Seattle.

Kevin Dunn

1. Neighborhood Brats, *Claw Marks*
2. The Pretty Flowers, *Golden Beat Sessions*
3. The Fleshies, *Introducing The Fleshies*
4. Hope Is Noise, *Demons*
5. Sean Carswell, *Dead Extra* (book)

Kurt Morris

1. Idles, *Joy as an Act of Resistance*
2. Starflyer 59, *Young in My Head*
3. Cave In, *Final Transmission*
4. Camp Cope, *How to Socialise and Make Friends*
5. Motörhead, *Ace of Spades*

Martin Wong

- Save Music in Chinatown 18 with The Gears, Gitane Demone Quartet, Marriage Material, The Linda Lindas, and The

Building
furniture, Killing
Joke, and Twentynine Palms...

Castelalas. Thanks to everyone who has helped us support public education and promote subculture for kids who can handle it! Having it coincide with amazing mural painting at Castelar Elementary, whose music program our all-ages matinees support, made my heart explode.

- Chip Kinman singing Rank & File songs with I See Hawks In L.A. (Check out the Chip and Tony Kinman CD too!)
- *More Fun in the New World* book and release events.

- *Ip Man 4: Master Z* and Zhang Yimou's *Shadow* on the big screen.

- The Linda Lindas rolling along, with shows coming up with Bleached and Alice Bag!

Mike Faloon

1. Antietam, *Intimations of Immortality* CD (For each song on the record, there's a postcard with one of Tara's paintings)
2. Ben Lamar Gay, *Downtown Castles Can Never Block Out the Sun* LP
3. Lisa Marr With The Tranzmitters, *In the Summer 7"* EP
4. Pioneer Valley Zine Fest at Flywheel Collective, Easthampton, Mass. To my left sat a woman who published a zine all about strawberries, to my right sat a guy who wrote a haiku collection about the style of martial arts he's developed. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Zine fests are awesome.
5. J Robbins, *Swing Left* EP

Mike Fournier

- The World, *Reddish* LP
- Shellac, *The End of Radio 2 x LP*
- Notches, Distant, Witches With Dicks live at Greek American Social Club, Somerville, Mass. 5/30/2019 (with Scott and Gina)
- Older records I never listened to before now: Delay, *Circle*

Change, and The Feelies, *Crazy Rhythms*
• *Chernobyl* (TV series)

Mike Frame

1. L7, *Scatter the Rats*
2. Amyl & The Sniffers, Self-titled
3. Lizzo, *Cuz I Love You*
4. Pat Todd & The Rankoutsiders, *The Past Came Callin'*
5. The Short Fuses, *Live in Minneapolis*

Ollie Mikse's

Definitive Top Five Swingin' Utters albums

1. Self-titled
2. *Streets of San Francisco*
3. *Poorly Formed*
4. *Five Lessons Learned*
5. *Peace and Love*

Paul Silver

1. Ramona, *Deals, Deals, Deals!* LP
2. The Hammerbombs record release "shop show" with Odd Robot, False Positives, Sad Girlz Club
3. Allweather, *Through the Floor* LP
4. Heterofobia, *Queremos Ver El Mundo Arder* LP
5. Bracket, *Too Old to Die Young* LP

Rev. Norb

- Briefs, *Platinum Rats* LP
- Coloured Balls, "Won't You Make Up Your Mind" b/w "Devil's Disciple" 45
- Brad Marino, *Extra Credit* LP
- Smart Shoppers 7" EP
- Laissez Faires, "Phantom Stranger" b/w "Redundant Beach" single

Rich Cocksedge

- Seeing Newport County (unfortunately lose) at Wembley Stadium, London in the EFL League 2 play-off final against Tranmere Rovers.

- War On Women, Petrol Girls, F. Emasculata live at The Cavern, Exeter, U.K.
- Honest Thieves, *Ineptitude 7" EP*
- Cereal Killer, *The Beginning & End of Cereal Killer* LP
- Arrest, *Ei!* LP

Rick V.

1. Sekrete, *Endless Fucking Nightmare*
2. Roy Ellis aka Mr. Symarip, *Almighty Ska*
3. CAKE in Chicago (check out the zine/book reviews)
4. Public Enemy, *Tour of a Black Planet* VHS
5. Jonah Ray, Gena Gephart, Christian Borkey at the Lincoln Lodge.

RoQue Torres

1. Dryland: *Los Angeles Underground Art & Writing Anthology*, Ponte Las Pilas Press South Central L.A. / IG: @pontelaspilaspess
2. *When We Moved Away*, by Vanessa A. Vázquez (zine) / IG: @dopeandymummy
3. *Cansada* (zine), *Motherhood: From the Voices of Everyday, Chicana, Latina, Indigenous Parents* / IG: @beanpoetic
4. Artist José Lozano's *Chicano Wedding Loteria* (Illustrated card game)
5. Artist Jesse Barba, *Matchbooks* (book), Published by Kill Your Idols. Hand illustrated matchbooks / IG: @jessexbarba

Ryan Nichols

- Moonbather
- Building furniture
- Killing Joke at The Yost Theater
- Twentynine Palms, Calif.
- Magazine, *After the Fact* LP

Sean Koepenick

- Things to Look Forward to This Year*
1. The Ergs! reunion show
 2. The Bomb reunion show (please?)

3. Moving Targets new record
4. The Cure concert film
5. Stiff Little Fingers / Avengers show

Steve Adamyk

- Terry & Louie, *...A Thousand Guitars*
- Local Drags, *Shit's Lookin' Up!*
- Weird Numbers, *Minotaur Dreams*
- Hash Redactor, *Drecksound*
- Carly Rae Jepsen, *Dedicated*

Tim Brooks

- Condor, *Singles 2017-2018* LP
- Neutrals, *Kebab Disco* LP
- Sea Blite, *Grass Stains and Novocain* LP
- Tipex LP
- Battle Ruins, *Paris* cassette

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed

1. *Hail Satan?*
2. *Booksmart*
3. *Becoming Bond*
4. *Getting On*
5. *Polytechnique*

Todd Taylor

- Hidden Spots, *New Me, New You* LP
- Full Sun, *Thinkin' About It* LP
- The Fleshies, *Introducing The Fleshies* LP
- Steve Adamyk Band, *Paradise* LP
- Sean Carswell, *Dead Extra* (book) tie James Jay, *Barman* (book)
- Vacation, *Mouth Sounds #2699* LP

Ty Stranglehold

1. Droids Blood, *Be Free* LP
2. Weird Numbers, *Minotaur Dreams 7"*
3. The Freeze, *Calling All Creatures* LP
4. The Derelicts, *Life of Strife* LP
5. Cornerboys, *Waiting for 2020* LP



500 MILES TO MEMPHIS:

Blessed to Be Damned: CD

This record is basically the equivalent of standard artist flash at a tattoo shop, which isn't an insult. I think this is probably the definition of Americana punk: country- and bluegrass-tinged with nostalgic references to things like Walt Whitman ("O Captain, My Captain!") and vaguely rockabilly vibes. This feels pretty familiar but I'm sure folks have fun singing along to this at live shows, probably especially if they are outside. Also, they have a fancy website which might not matter, but is notable. —Theresa W. (Spazz)

ABC GUM: Self-titled: CD

This music is so aggressively jangly that it's almost confrontational. "Hey Emma, you don't like jangly punk? Well check this out! How about these jangles? You hear that? We're jangling louder now, just for you, Emma! Jangle jangle jangly jang! We can jangle fast and we can jangle slow! Are you jangling with us now, Emma? Are you? ARE YOU!" *Emma flees in jangly terror* —Emma Alice Johnson (Let's Pretend)

ABOLITIONIST: Ugly Feeling: 12" EP

Apparently, this is the final release from these guys who were on a hot streak with cranking out records the past few years. This outing feels a little subdued in comparison to the previous outings. The guitar crunch is still there, the drumming is top notch, and the vocals have a bit more bite than before, but there's a feeling of restraint permeating this record, or maybe it's melancholy brought on by the knowledge that this may very well be the end. Anyway, the songs are pretty good, and mostly on the mid-tempo side of the scale. "Failed Mutation" is a solid way to kick it all off; "Willie B. Bacon" cleverly places the subject matter in the title; "Shelter" has a good, hammering pace; "Walls" wraps it all up nicely; and "Ugly Feelings," the most driving of all twelve is my favorite here. It has an energy that puts you right in the moment. —Matt Average (1859)

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE ■ THE MELTING PARADISE U.F.O. / ORPHAN GOGGLES: Split: 7"

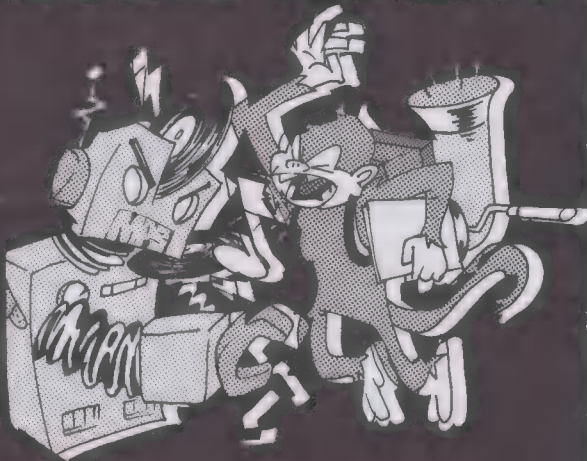
I've heard of Acid Mothers Temple, of course, but never actually listened to them before this 7" arrived at my door. Cool stuff: much more trippy and Krautrock-y/less heavy than I had imagined. Orphan Goggles are out of their minds, playing unhinged heavy psychedelia that wouldn't sound out of place at a lysergic Gibby Haynes BBQ. Solid, fun, and weird stuff all around. —Michael T. Fournier (orphangoggles.bandcamp.com)

AGGRAVATED ASSAULT NYE:

B4 Core: The Punk Years: CD-R

Before the nasty hatemongering band Aggravated Assault, there was this unrelated Aggravated Assault, a NYHC outfit with Doug Beans from

RECORD REVIEWS



If Future Virgins tried to cover the first Black Flag EP but had to make all the songs at least two minutes long.

—Keith Rosson

VACATION, Mouth Sounds #2699 LP

Murphy's Law on drums. This release is primarily of lost demos from way back in the day, including a Don Fury Studio session from 1985. There are also tracks from 1986 and from the present day. This raw demo captures pure NYHC when that form was in its infancy. The tracks pack quite a punch, showcasing a group whose present-day return is a much-welcomed surprise. —Art Ettinger (Self-released, aggravated.assault.nyc@gmail.com)

AMMO: Demo: CS

Rabid, classic style hardcore from New Jersey not unlike Double Negative, Antidote, Gauze, and early Madball. Packs a fucking punch for just seven songs in just over ten minutes. That breakdown towards the end of "Known Unknown" is a busted lip waiting to happen. Backed hard. —Juan Espinosa (Headcount)

ASSEMBLE: Hold Your Ground: CD

Philadelphia-based Assemble really have themselves nailed when they describe themselves as a band that "plays fast, catchy, and sometimes heavy melodic punk" that is "reminiscent of a slightly earlier time" by which they mean the mid-'90s. On the second part I would disagree, only because I feel like this particular brand of somewhere-between-mid-and-fast-tempo with gang vocals and fast rolls has been a pretty central staple since then. It's semi-posi and predictable, which I guess we all need once in a while. —Theresa W. (Residual Waste)

B'SCHIBN / PONYS AUF PUMP:

Split: LP

I love a good split! Two-for-one deal, ya know. B'Schibn are from Halle, Germany, and it's just really smart

and complex punk. It sounds like Lögnhalsmottagningen but not tripping over their feet to spit out all the words. Flip to Ponys Auf Pump from Berlin: they offer throbbing, simplistic, and catchy synth dance punk. And I love it. —Camylle Reynolds (Phantom, phantom.tk)

BAD YEAR: My Escape: Single-sided LP

As I attempted to cobble together a rough description of this band's sound (the best I could do was "verses which sound like they're coming from the general direction of the Mr. T Experience with choruses that sound like the punk on the radio fifteen years ago"), I realized that all my cultural reference points for pop punk were like fifteen or twenty years old and I have gone from being someone who could once speak with a fair degree of authority on the matter to someone who really has no idea what's going on and probably shouldn't even be talking. Then I decided that the genre was pretty much caught in a big fuckin' stasis field anyway, so I was probably still an authority and could complete my review. Anyway, I like the packaging and I think the music is reasonably decent, but the record lacks anything resembling a standout tune—there's really nothing on here to draw me back for repeated listenings. For a while, I thought the album-closing "Bad Year" might be that song, until I realized it was a Sicko cover—ironic, because I felt the same way as I feel about this album about Sicko's *You Can Feel the Love in This Room*, except for its album-closing song, "Closer to Fine," which I thought was just outstanding—until Jim from the New Bomb Turks told me that "Closer to Fine" was an

Indigo Girls cover, so there ya go. Maybe I'm the one in the stasis field? BEST SONG: "Bad Day," which, for all I know, is an Indigo Girls cover. BEST SONG TITLE: "Here, Hold My Cake." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: According to the run-off grooves, "BAD YEAR MEANS FRIENDSHIP." —Rev. Nørb (Snappy Little Numbers)

BANDY: The Challengers: CD

This has a soulful Mark Sultan quality to the vocals which I very much like, especially in the first song, "Bring the Boys to the Basement." Otherwise it sounds like shit my dad listened to in the '70s and never stopped listening to. Snapshot of when rock music was just starting to cut loose before proper punk bands started. The second track is just a cookie cutter blues song about having a need for weed, but they call it reefer. I think my point has been made. —Kayla Greet (Under The Counter)

BASTARD DISCO: China Shipping: CD

Bastard Disco hail from Warsaw with a thick and distorted alternative sound that is very similar to Jawbox. And I have to admit I'm not a fan of Jawbox, so I'll leave it at that. —Camylle Reynolds (Antena Krzyku, Karoryfer, antenakrzyku.pl)

BEAR AWAY:

Never in the Same Place: CD/CS

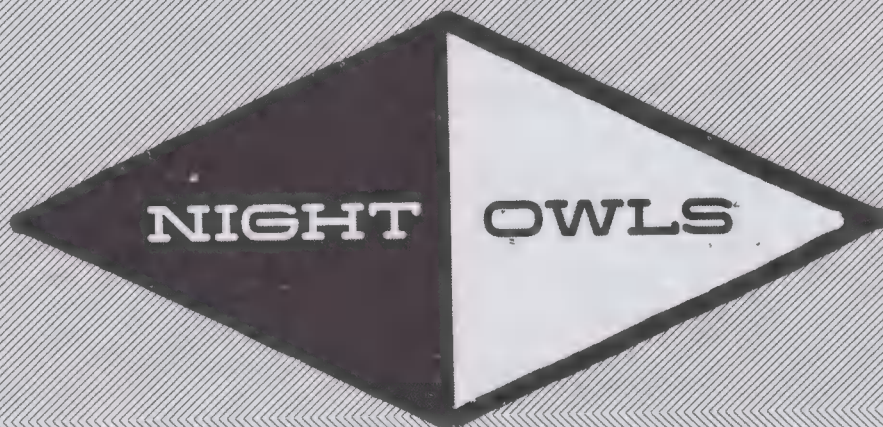
From what I can glean, this is a debut release for a band whose members have previously done time in Failsafe For Tomorrow, Transatlantic Airwaves, plus a bunch of others. If you have a hankering for another band that gives off Iron Chic and Hot Water Music musical vibes then dive right into this. It's a pretty strong start for a band to even nail down one really noticeable song, but Bear Away manages to pull two out of the bag with "Parts and Labour" and "Growing Up." The other two tracks have their moments too but just lack the same impact. Strong and interesting twin guitar work plus a really good vocal performance go a long way in making Bear Away a band to keep an eye on. —Rich Cocksedge (Disillusioned)

BEND OVER BOYS, THE: Self-titled: 10"

Artistically, this record was confusing. I couldn't tell which side was meant to be the front or back. The music is a bit on the sloppy-drunk side and then there's the strange cover of Paul Anka's "Having My Baby." Listening to these songs made me feel like I was at the macho, male-dominated bar where fights tend to break, and I tend to avoid. —Ryan Nichols (Self-released, no address listed)

BERZERKERS, THE: Can't Stand Still: LP

Punk steeped in the classic O.C. sound with a heavy slathering of rock mixed in for good measure. Songs are well written and insanely catchy—which offsets the rock component quite nicely—and the band has a polish that sounds like its members have been



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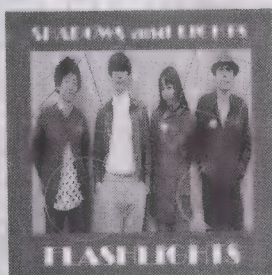
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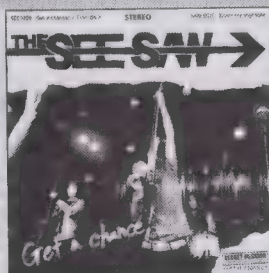
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BEATSEEKER



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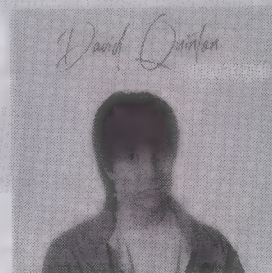
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at this for-friggin'-ever. Still stumps me where Rick consistently finds the caliber of bands he does, and these cats are a fine addition to his already stellar stable. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hostage)

BLAHA: *Survival Climb*: CS

Skewed, bouncy garage trash from members of Minneapolis's The Blind Shake. My favorite track is "Who's That in the Trees?" which sounds like Devo covering ZZ Top. It's an outlier on an album full of outliers, and every track has something unusual and appealing going on. —Chris Terry (No Coast)

BLOWBACK: *Great Again: 7"*

Self-described "protest punk" band Blowback is back with their sixth 7" and first new music in seven years. As one would correctly predict based on the title and what has occurred in their hometown of Washington, D.C. in the intervening years, this record is a little angry. "Out of Control Bullshit" is the most apt song title and mirrors how I feel about everything happening in this horrid Trumpian world. Listening to this desperate, frustrated expression of outrage at high volume does provide some small catharsis. The mocking "I Don't Need Advice" expresses that exasperated feeling we all get when we hear about the latest pile of idiotic bullshit expelled from that fucking moron's tiny fingertips, and provides a brief, much-needed dose of humor. This is the kind of punk we need right now. —Chad Williams (Stringbreak, blowback.org)

BLOWBACK: *Great Again: 7"*

There is no doubt that this Washington D.C. band is directing the majority of its anger towards the current President of the United States and his administration, a target readymade for punks not only in America but around the world. Blowback might be a hardcore band, but it is not one content on just nailing a song down at breakneck speed. The songs are structured with a variety of speeds, twists, and turns. This highlights a Dead Kennedys' style of attack, although the title track kick starts proceedings with an early G.B.H guitar and bass drive that is reminiscent of the *Leather, Bristles, Studs and Acne* era. Anything that is anti-Trump is fine by me and more so when it's this good. —Rich Cocksedge (Stringbreak)

BOO HAG: *Marie Laveau: 7"*

Big hole, two-song 45 from a band outta South Carolina with a very swampy, dark Americana sound. Sounds like they might have a few Tav Falco records and the Dex Romweber discography in their collections. Very well done for the style and if you like your garage tunes swampy and dark, this would be a great record to add. —Mike Frame (Boo Hag)

BOOB SWEAT: *Self-titled*: CS

I've said for a while that I wanted to start an angry riot grrrl band with all the pop punk pep and upbeat energy of Pkew Pkew Pkew. So catchy but instead of dudes singing about beer,

nonmen singing about issues and our lives. Turns out, I'm too late because Boob Sweat, a three piece from Grand Rapids, Mich., has that covered. The EP only has four songs but each could be the standout single on a longer record. The bass line on "Madison Ave" hooked me before I even heard the bright, charming vocals. This might be the catchiest, sing-a-longiest "Fuck you!" I've ever heard and to be honest, I've looked. I couldn't help but smile at "TAMP-OFF!" a bouncy melody about inconveniently getting your period. I hope they release a full length soon because I could use more of this in my life. —Lorien Lamarr (Self-released, boob.sweat.official@gmail.com)

BORON HEIST: *Ridin Rough*: CD

Gruff rock/punk that recalls some of the sensibilities of early oi—gravelly vocals with a streak of amateurism instead of slick production and slicker "rock" posturing. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mystery School)

BRACKET: *Too Old to Die Young*: LP

After spending a few years slowing down and putting out records on other labels, the black sheep of Fat Wreck have made a triumphant return. Black sheep only in that I don't imagine they've seen anywhere close to the record sales as Lagwagon or some of the other flagship bands. But here's the thing, Bracket is great, and they've always been great. So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that *Too Old to Die*

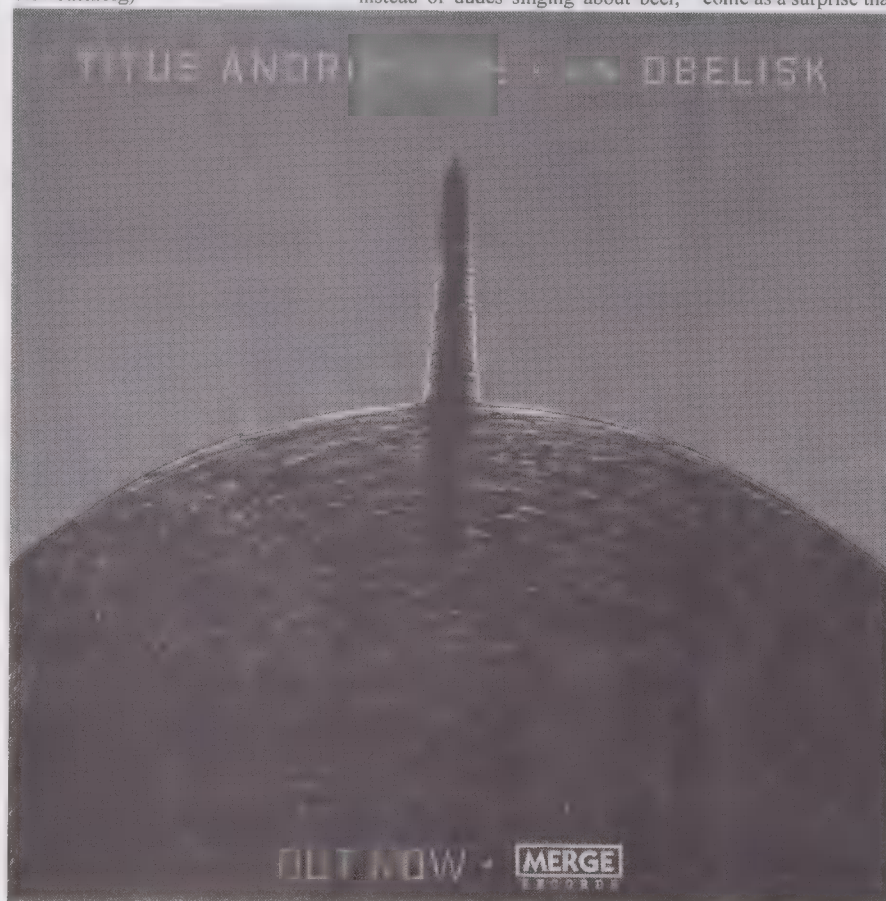
Young is equally stellar. Somehow, they're able to sound near-identical to how they did twenty years ago, guitar tones and all. Seriously impressive. Coincidentally, I recently revisited their older stuff (924 Forestville, et cetera.), so this album has perfect timing. No surprises here at all. The soundtrack of simpler times. Someone please reissue 924 Forestville, too. —Steve Adamyk (Fat, fatwreck.com)

BRUISED: "Arrow of Disease" b/w "Psychic Stain": 7"

Can't tell if that's a synth or a weird guitar lead on "Arrow of Disease," but it gives this thud-punk pounder a gothy, early Spits feel. I think the lyrics are about the heroin epidemic, while "Psychic Stain" seems to be about feeling lost in technology and has a more proto-hardcore sound. I especially like Side A but both tracks are nihilistic winners and I'll be keeping an eye on this Chicago band. —Chris Terry (Randy)

BUFFET: *All American*: LP

I am utterly obsessed with this debut LP from Anacortes, Wash.'s genre-benders Buffet. They're absolutely hilarious, but not in the beat you over the head way that would put them in the joke band box. Musically, they're all over the place, with elements from pop punk and various strains of hardcore dominating the mix. Defying easy comparisons or curt labeling, the end sound is unique, but one that I am confident that a wide range of people



in the subculture will enjoy. A veritable buffet of punk stylings, Buffet offers something for everyone. Color me a huge fan. —Art Ettinger (All You Can Eat / Know-Yr-Own / Resurrection)

CAVE IN: *Final Transmission*: CD/LP

Final Transmission is a difficult album to listen to and not because it's a bad album. In fact, it's quite good. Granted, the 2019 version of Cave In is much different than the 1999 version I grew up listening to. Long gone are the teenage metal days. Their transition to rock was solidified with their album *Jupiter*. What makes these nine songs so difficult to listen to is that they are the last that bassist Caleb Scofield played on before his untimely death in a car accident in 2018. This album was originally meant to be demos and Scofield played on these tracks before his passing. Afterward, the band decided to complete the album — it stood, and it comes out sounding great, thanks to some fine mastering work. Some of the riffs are meaty, such as on "Winter Widow" and "Lantern." There are a few more laid back tunes including the title track, which is Scofield playing acoustic guitar and singing, "doo doo doo doo." It's gentle but also melancholy due to who is singing it and the sound. *Final Transmission* may or may not be the last Cave In album, but if it is, it's a solid commemoration to a band that has existed for over twenty years and included friendship, death, and life. —Kurt Morris (Hydrahead)

CEREAL KILLER: *The Beginning & End of Cereal Killer*: LP

There are certain bands in Australia that make me wonder if sticking to the underside of planet earth causes them to go a bit crazy with all that blood running to their heads. Cereal Killer is a prime example based on *The Beginning & End of Cereal Killer*, an album that is part psychedelic, part hardcore, and part just plain weird. To be honest, I don't care what helps the band make music like this as I'm finding it to be an exhilarating record that is currently getting frequent plays. The vocals sound — if they have been shredded through a microphone with the oral equivalent of a cheese grater before being committed to vinyl to create an oddly hi-fi lo-fi sound. I was floored on hearing this once. I'm now like a well-beaten boxer, out for count and unable to get to their feet. —Rich Cocksedge (Drunken Sailor / AntiFade)

CHANNEL 3: *The Bellwether*: 12" EP

One of Posh Boy's signature bands pays homage to their old label with a spot-on, new five-song EP to bookend with their 1981 debut EP. Their output remains surprisingly consistent for a band in its fourth decade of existence; well-written and deft at balancing hardcore muscle and a strong pop sensibility. Every song here bats the metaphorical ball outta the park, and opener "What You Need" demonstrates they can still kick up dust with the best of 'em. Summer 2019's soundtrack is

shaping up to be a doozy, and this is a most excellent addition to it. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hostage)

CHARGER: *Crackdown*: 7"

I was kinda dubious because of the name, generic artwork, the fact that it's on a flexi that is essentially an advertisement for Pirates Press, but it's pretty okay motörcharged punk'n'roll. There's absolutely nothing unique about this at all, and you've heard these riffs a million times, but it's okay. Features members of Operation Ivy and other bands. I read an interview with them and it really turned me off. The whole metallic rock'n'roll thing seems to be the new trend in punk, and there are bands doing the same thing—but better—that don't make me roll my eyes. Maybe next time they'll hop on a trend that they can push in a more unique direction, but for now I'd rather just listen to LVGER or any of the other dozens of bands doing this sort of thing right now. —Ian Wise (Pirates Press)

CHARGER: *Crackdown*: LP

Sounds like all of Oakland has been listening to Motörhead recently. Charger gets a lot of play as they are fronted by Matt from Rancid, so you know it's going to be good. Don't get me wrong, my collection is filled with Motörhead and motörpunk records, I love this shit. Charger does it as well as any others but don't stray too far from the path. I'd say LVGER and Inepsy did it before and did it better,

but if Motörhead is your vibe this one is worthy. —Tim Brooks (Pirates Press)

CHESTY MALONE AND THE SLICE 'EM UPS: *Satanic Brooklyn Scum*: 7"

This band seems to have been around for quite some time but this is my first time actually hearing a recording. Unsurprisingly, given the name, scum punk is the vibe happening here. Fans of bands such as Midnight Creeps, Meatmen, and Frankenstein Drag Queens From Planet 13 will wanna be all over this. —Mike Frame (1332)

CHRIST VIOLENCE: *Demo*: CS

This is not music. I'm sorry, but it isn't. Causing sound to come out of my speakers does not make the thing that was recorded "music." As I progress through life (now at age forty), I try to be less judgmental about these sorts of things and evaluate everything that comes into my world on its merits, not for what I wish it was. Noise is an ever-present nuisance in life already: car alarms, incessantly barking dogs, idling trucks, people yelling into their invisible phones in public, et cetera. Point being, there's zero chance that I want to add to that din by intentionally listening to noise. So, unfortunately, this piece of plastic is going straight to the landfill. —Chad Williams (Self-released)

CJ RAMONE: *The Holy Spell*...: CD

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because you didn't care, because it just didn't matter. *Mondo Bizarro* was my first Ramones album and I played it over and over. When I got deeper into punk and people chastised me for liking this one, I stopped playing it, putting the earlier Ramones stuff into rotation instead. Now that I'm older and once again realize that it just doesn't matter, I've been revisiting the record and it really is my favorite. One of the reasons I fell in love with it—and still love it—is CJ Ramone, specifically his vocals on "Strength to Endure." That song is perfect as far as I'm concerned. Still, I'd never spent any time with CJ's solo stuff until now. *The Holy Spell...* is exactly what I want it to be. It's driving, heartfelt, simple punk rock'n'roll. It's really comfortable. I sank into it quickly and left it playing over and over and it was nice. It's got enough of that late period Ramones vibe to satisfy without being overly reliant on it, adding fresh flourishes to make it sound modern. It's just a fun record. Listen to what you want, okay? Life's too short to worry about what's cool. —Emma Alice Johnson (Fat)

CLOWNS: *Nature/Nurture*: CD

In retrospect, a lot of the glossy skatepunk that Fat was churning out in the '90s was basically slicked-up heavy metal with snotty vocals. Australia's Clowns (good for them for locking that name down) take the Fat sound to its logical conclusion, finding exciting ways to add metallic

bombast to their music. Well-placed guitar shredding that takes ■ song to the next level, ominous quiet parts, and creepy sung vocals all pop up in ways that mesh well with the catchy punk base. This is Clowns' fourth album, their first for Fat, and they take the listener to a lot of places over the course of what turns out to be a remarkably cohesive album. I should add that the production is positively huge, and this record makes me want to throw a couch off my roof. —Chris Terry (Fat)

COKIE THE CLOWN: *You're Welcome*: CD

I kind of hate that I have to listen to Fat Mike's midlife crisis. I have made an effort thus far to avoid this persona since it first appeared a few years back, but here we are. Cokie is Mike writing songs about his most soul-crushing sadness with minimalist accompaniment. It isn't bad music at all. In fact, Mike is a good songwriter, but this is simply excruciating to listen to. Piling his sadness on top of my own is almost too much to handle. I feel empty now. I was caught unprepared when the song about Naja came on ("The Queen Is Dead"). I teared up. Mission accomplished? —Ty Stranglehold (Fat)

COKIE THE CLOWN: *You're Welcome*: CD

I'll be honest, this Fat Mike character is pretty much a total stranger to me. I never paid much attention to NOFX,

having early on sensed that they were frat boy punk. And even though I rarely take my own opinions very seriously, a person, after all, only has so much time on this little speck of space dandruff we call earth and one simply can't be deeply acquainted with *everything*. So I flagrantly marginalized Fat Mike and went about my business, despite being aware that some people consider him a punk rock Person of Importance. If nothing else, Fat Wreck put out some D4 albums and I did respectfully take note of that. But what of this *You're Welcome* CD? This clown-festooned Happy Meal is anything but happy and is thematically similar to Alice Cooper's *Welcome to My Nightmare*, or Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. We are presented with a protagonist (or alter-ego) named Cokie the Clown who has been dragged through the burning dung heaps of life and now dangles by a bloody saliva strand over ■ burping abyss of nihilism and madness. *You're Welcome* is little more than naked catharsis accompanied by piano and strings. The songs are plaintive, emotionally jagged ballads where there's more than just a tear in Emmett Kelly's beer. Now if that sounds too wounded and introspective for you, fear not, the whole thing is pimped with ■ delicious acne of punkish anger. Cynics and haters will call it flatulent, self-indulgent whining—but I'm kind of surprised to report that I find myself not in that camp. As someone who has dangled by a saliva strand over the burping abyss more than once, I guess

I have a soft spot for grim, broken-hearted stuff like this. —Aphid Peewit (Fat Wreck Chords)

CORNER BOYS: *Waiting For 2020*: LP

I absolutely love what's going on in Vancouver right now. Chain Whip, Sore Points, and Corner Boys are three of my favorite bands right now (and oddly all feature members of the gone way too soon Nervous Talk). Corner Boys' first two singles (on Drunken Sailor and Dirt Cult respectively) solidified them as a force of punk rock awesomeness and the debut LP really hammers that home. The vocals are snottier than a sinus infection, which suits the raw jangle of the guitar perfectly. The songs bounce along one after another and I am bouncing right along with them. Throw in some choruses that are impossible not to sing along with and we have ■ winner! More please! —Ty Stranglehold (Drunken Sailor)

COYOTE BRED: *Somewhere Else*: CD

There's just nothing here that really connects with me. It mostly feels like radio friendly mid-tempo rock with gruff Dave Grohl-like vocals. I haven't quite listened to enough Foo Fighters to make ■ solid comparison, but man I sure can easily lump their sound in with bands like that. While I'm sure these songs were written with real forethought and intention, the way they came out sonically is just not up my alley. It's also ■ bold choice to start the whole record with

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to skip to the next. —Steve Adamyk (Saustex, Saustex.com)

DISLOCATION: *Youth Control*: CDEP

This Milwaukee four-piece is comprised of high school students and I must admit they sound a lot better than anything my friends were doing in our teens. The music is fast punk, like a cross between DRI and the Descendents. There's a rumbling bass and shredding guitars with tight drumming. The vocals are a little off-key on some of the songs; I'd love to hear more yelling than singing on these tracks. Not sure if that would mean the need for a new vocalist, but the band could still retain a skate punk sound, even with a tougher vocal edge. Still, these five songs are promising. —Kurt Morris (dislocation1.bandcamp.com)

D.O.A.: *1978*: CD

Between 1978 and 1982, D.O.A.—well, to me anyway—hit an almost perfect balance between a number of traditionally well-separated aesthetic poles: They tightrope effortlessly between growling and melody, proficiency and *unga bunga bunga* primitivism, everyday-joe slobbishness and street fashion stylishness (okay, that last one is kind of a stretch). They were bright and stupid, edgy and traditionalist, dead serious and drunken clowns. They found a seam between pretty much all of existence, and then barreled on through it, unshaven. As luck would have it, this disc is twenty-one

odds and ends—mostly songs from demos and singles—from that very period. And, while nothing here is so fricking wheel-reinventing that it will make you dump your copies of *Something Better Change*, *Hardcore '81* and *War on 45* into your uncle's hot tub whilst shrieking *oh lordy I can't listen to that stolid gunk no more now that these demo versions have shown me the light, the truth, and the way*, I still get a kick out of hearing how the background vocals in "The Enemy" used to go "1-2-3-4, enemy!" instead of just "the enemy!" and stuff like that. It seems like there are almost enough stray tracks from 1978-82 that never made it onto those three aforementioned albums that they could be scraped together, re-recorded (did I just say that of my own free will?), and released as *The Great Lost D.O.A. Album*—they could call it *Hardcore 2019* or something. If that happens and it sucks, forget I said anything. **BEST SONG THAT I HAVEN'T HEARD A MILLION TIMES BEFORE:** "Rent-A-Riot." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Kill, Kill, This Is Pop." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Only two-sevenths of these tracks were actually recorded in 1978. —Rev. Nørð (Sudden Death)

DOWN AND OUTS, THE:

Keep Walking: 7"

Following on from last year's excellent *Double Negative* album, this Liverpoolian trio is back with three more cracking punk rock tunes

to delight its listeners. The Down And Outs do things in a straightforward manner but do them exceptionally well. The songs make great use of melodies whilst maintaining a bit of a crunch to the sound; all three have earworm qualities about them. Making good music doesn't need to be complicated and here is conclusive proof of that statement. Check this out and if you like what you hear and are new to the band, I recommend working your way through the band's back catalogue, you won't be disappointed. —Rich Cocksedge (Brassneck)

DR. GHOST: *Criminalized Survival*: CD

This is the fourth full-length from Dr. Ghost, a Long Beach institution that continues to produce catchy melodic hardcore for those into hooky, political punk. Reminiscent of less-produced Leftöver Crack, with punchy tracks you can sing along to instantly, Dr. Ghost is a treat for kids of all ages. There are some misplaced, semi-metallic lead guitar lines that I could do without, but otherwise this is a load of fun. —Art Ettinger (Riot Ready, riotreadyrecords.com)

DROIDS BLOOD: *Be Free*: LP

I love it when I can get to a point with a record label when I know when they're putting something out that there is at least a ninety percent chance that I am going to be into it. I am there with Drunken Sailor. Juice Man has released some of my favorite records in the last few years and it



looks like there is no end in sight. Chicago's Droids Blood is the latest in a long list. When you think of the term "synth rock," what do you think of? I was a kid in the '80s, so images of the radio hits, and MuchMusic (that's MTV for Canadians), come to mind. Big hair and moping. Droids Blood is not that. There is plenty of synth involved, and it sure as hell rocks, but there is an evil urgency about it. The band is fucking angry and it makes me angry in a really joyful way. It's like the soundtrack to smashing the windows out a car covered in racist stickers. Adrenalized violence with a big dumb grin... or so I would imagine. —Ty Stranglehold (Drunken Sailor, drunken Sailorrecords.co.uk)

DUMB VISION: *Modern Things*: CS

The loud, abrasive riffs of Dumb Vision had me immediately hooked. There's just the right mix of weirdness in with the punk'n'roll to make Dumb Vision stand out from other bands in the genre. I also really dug the eight-bit video game-looking artwork on the cover. —Paul J. Comeau (Let's Pretend)

DUMB: *Club Nites*: CD

Shambolic Canadian post-punk with a dense cascade of witty lyrics that hit extra hard on the title track and "Content Jungle," which earns Song Title of the Month honors. Hearing The Minutemen, Art Brut, and Parquet Courts and getting the feeling that these are the people who make

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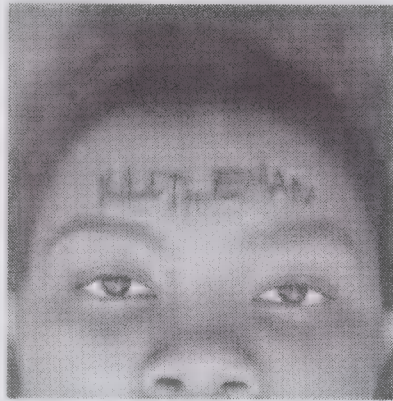
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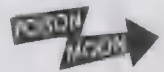
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the party fun by standing in the corner making fun of it. —Chris Terry (Mint)

EARLY DISCLAIMERS: EP3: CS

Conner Oberst meets The Postal Service. Blown-out indie vocals with sleepy guitar and lots of reverb. If you like to pass out to emo, this is it. —Kayla Greet (Let's Pretend)

E.D.S.: Probation: CS

Super dark, pummeling hardcore stuff with nary a good thought or deep breath in sight. Bleak and unrelenting, particularly in the lyrics department, but there's only four songs on it, so the punishment's over with pretty quickly. I like the "bandana, leather gloves, sleeveless Hüsker Dü shirt" aesthetic the singer's rocking in the sole band photo, very charming. —Keith Rosson (E.D.S., no address listed)

EJECTOR SEATS, THE: Blueprint for a Miserable Existence: LP

Stranger than ever, Ejector Seats continue a long run of playing fast, noisy garage pop. Quietly prolific, they're developing quite the repertoire. This new LP does not disappoint. As was the case with their prior records, the packaging is as beautiful and wild as the contents. The summer of 2019 marks my twentieth anniversary as a record reviewer, first at *Punk Planet*, and then at *Razorcake*. In two decades, I reviewed 1,232 records so far. This is the fifth Ejector Seats LP that I've had the pleasure of reviewing. The Ejector Seats are precisely the type of band

that makes this process such an honor. Thanks for being a mainstay, Ejector Seats. You're fucking great. —Art Ettinger (Collision Course)

EJECTOR SEATS, THE: Blueprint for a Miserable Existence: LP

When I opened this record I was really impressed with the care put in to the vinyl, but somehow the music didn't have the same flair. Sonically, it sounds like something is missing or maybe the mastering has an issue. Aside from that, the songs are really fun and reminded me of The Briefs and The Stitches. There's a nice addition of keyboard, without over doing it and losing that punky edge you can pogo to. —Ryan Nichols (Collision Course)

EL BANDA: Wiatr Sieje Nas: LP

Fierce post-punk from Poland. At times impactful although sometimes long-winded and yet other times too melodic for my taste. This is their third full length so if you're familiar with these Poles you would most likely approve. Unfortunately for me, listening to this whole album proved to be a chore. At least I tried? —Juan Espinosa (Pasazer, pasazer.pl)

E.T. EXPLORE ME: Shine: CD

This Dutch trio thrusts upon us a beautiful cacophony of garagey, psychedelic-infused fuzz. A good soundtrack for exploring catacombs with a case of beer or a midnight barbecue with a guest list of ghoulies and ne'er-do-wells. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Voodoo Rhythm)

EVEN IN BLACKOUTS: Romantico!: LP

The cobwebs have been dusted off of John "Jughead" Pearson's post-Screaming Weasel band Even In Blackouts. While they've been kicking it around live for the last couple of years (not to mention, the reissue of older material), this is the first offering of new songs in over a decade. I was lucky enough to catch them live in Europe over the summer, which is funny, mostly because the last time I saw them in the flesh was also in Europe, back in 2005. It's shocking how little has changed in the last chunk of years for them. What sets *Romantico!* aside from the rest of their releases is that things have been noticeably turned up. While styled as a very dynamic, acoustic-based LP, there's a lot of full band rock here with loud, fuzzed-out guitars and wild drumming. You won't find a track like "Grow Hole" on their former releases. If you've been curious about the band, this is a good place to start. —Steve Adamyk (Stardumb)

FLESHIES, THE:

Introducing The Fleshes: LP

What better way to celebrate twenty years as a band than a name change and a new full-length. Good-bye Fleshes, thank you for the memories of bedlam and disorder, hello *The Fleshes!* Now, don't think we've lost the band we all know and love with the addition of a single determiner word. The Fleshes still wield a sound of undiluted, cutting damnation. *Introducing The*

Fleshes is a point by point checklist regarding the current shitstate we find ourselves in, and a call to arms for those to recognize their privilege and fuckin' do something with it. The music is chaotic and catchy, shifting speeds and vocal stylings; you get a band with multiple bests. From the speedy, driving numbers, to droney, blown-out tracks, to the requisite weirdo pop anthem. It's *The Fleshes!*; they're all over the place, climbing up your body and screaming in your ear. Let this record pump you up to give your conservative cousin a call and ask them why they're acting like a fuckin' asshole! Here's to twenty more years of *The Fleshes!* —Daryl (Dirt Cult)

FREEZE, THE:

Calling All Creatures: LP

Did I think I would be reviewing a new album by The Freeze in 2019? Not on your life. Am I glad I am? Hell yes! Cape Cod's first punk band has been a favorite of mine for many years, though when this appeared I will admit that I had that apprehensive feeling in my gut whenever a legendary punk band puts forth a new album. I never know how to reconcile my love of a band with a lousy new album. Thankfully, that is not an issue here. Musically, the album features hard hitting, mid-tempo punk rock rippers with Clif Hanger's trademark witty delivery showing us a window into the darker facets of humanity. I've been playing this repeatedly getting

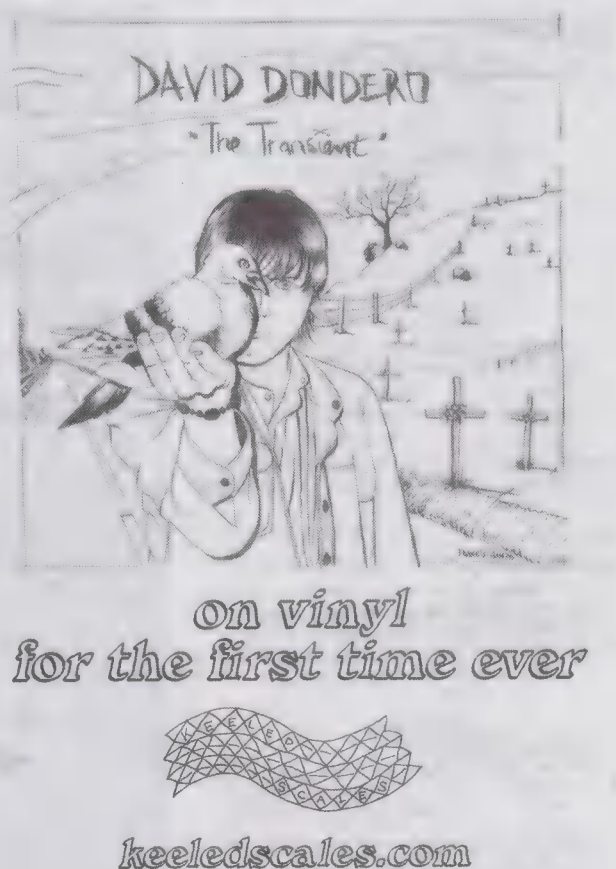


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the songs happily stuck in my head. Forty plus years in and The Freeze are still bringing the goods. At least one thing is right in the world. —Ty Stranglehold (Slope)

FRESH: *Withdraw*: LP/CD

I am totally intrigued by Kathryn Woods' lyrics and their delivery on this, Fresh's second album. On one hand there are frequent times when it seems as if she is doubting herself in various ways—with ■ melancholic feel coming to the surface—but these are offset by words indicating ■ position of strength and self-worth. It gives me the sense that much has happened to result in such ■ swing in the lyrical content. My favorite moment comes in "Revenge" where Woods breaks free from ■ measured vocal to shout "I am valued, I am loved/ I will get revenge on everyone who has done me wrong." I am left with a sense of strength and defiance coming from Woods, which makes for the perfect way to view *Withdraw*. There is a definite melancholic tone to this record but these indie punks manage that well and provide ■ delightful suite of songs. —Rich Cocksedge (Specialist Subject)

FRONTIER CLUB:

Speaking in Cursive: 7"

Excellent post-punk from Long Beach featuring members from Gestapo Khazi, Neighborhood Brats, Street Trash, Geisha Girls, and Slaughter & The Dogs. They remind me of

Cat Party and what was coming out of the U.K. in the early 1980s. The beat is primitive, skirting tribal, and effectively pulls you in to the dark and cavernous sound constructed by the band working together create something you should bring into your life. The guitar is cold, but not distant. It has a great tone that blasts out of the dark, lighting the path for you to follow through to the end. The vocals tread Robert Smith territory without falling in to the crying side. They are intelligible and forceful without pretense. The title track is the more cool and composed of the three, while the other two, "Cases" and "The Visitor," turn up the tempo and aggression, underscoring the punk in their post-punk style. —Matt Average (Garage Rock)

FRONTIER CLUB:

Speaking in Cursive: 7"

All these guys have been playing in great punk bands for years, so it's no surprise that this record sounds good. It's sharp, fast, spazzy, post-punk, with ■ dirty, city feel to it. For fans of the first wave of Los Angeles punk bands, The Estranged, and Masshysteri. —Ryan Nichols (Garage Rock)

FULL SUN: *Thinkin About It*: LP

Almost a decade in and we get the best Full Sun release yet. This full-band LP is loaded with big hooks, beautiful harmonies from Jeff Grant and Erin Tobey, and fun traces of '60s guitar pop—from surf shakes to

"A Hazy Shade of Winter"—filtered through the Marked Men-ish melodic punk that has been the backbone of Full Sun since it was Grant's post-Pink Razors solo project. The lyrics seem to be searching for peace as they look back bitterly and worry for the future, offsetting the bright music and creating a sun shower. —Chris Terry (Let's Pretend)

GARY LLAMA: *extra*: CD

This is not a punk record. It is, however, almost everything else. The record starts with ■ synth darkwave instrumental, which is followed by a rock country protest song. From there we have a '90s alternative track and four instrumental songs, one of which is largely ambient noise from car traffic. Finally, we close with a twangy blues song. This record confuses me. I think he wrote two songs but wanted to draw that out into a full album and so went "experimental" on it. —Lorien Lamarr (OVOLOR!)

GEOFF PALMER:

Pulling Out All the Stops: LP

Geoff's been slugging it out a long time. Whether it be with The Guts, The Connection, or backing up Kurt Baker, it seems like he barely has a moment to breathe. But it all started out with his band The Useless Fucks in the late '90s, who ended up becoming the rhythm section for The Queers. Not long after that, Geoff joined the Nobodys; talk about having those on your punk resume at the ripe age of

eighteen. I first met Geoff in Ottawa when he was tagging along with The Vapids, whom I was releasing ■ 7" for. We hit it off, from what I recall, and even though I hung with him again when the Nobodys came to town, we didn't keep in touch. Hard to believe the night we met was literally twenty years ago to the month, but time flies. Anyway, after releasing an LP under the Geoff Useless moniker a few years back, he's now switched to Palmer, and this rebirth was worth the wait. Fans of his band and this label will know exactly what they're getting into, and that's ■ good thing. Modern-style power pop, well recorded with big, beefy guitars. *Pulling Out all the Stops* is what Matthew Sweet joining the Ramones would sound like. You won't be disappointed. —Steve Adamyk (Stardumb)

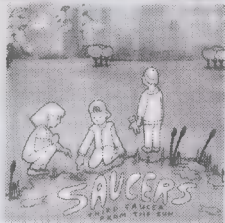
GIGGLY BOYS: *Another Close Call*: 7"

Two-song single on the long-running Snappy Little Numbers label outta Denver. A-side song has a real Burger Records kinda reverby backing track with vocals that bring Lux Interior to mind. Flip side has a song called "Dead Again," which sounds ■ little more bouncy and poppy with a driving backbeat. —Mike Frame (Snappy Little Numbers)

GIGGLINGER: *Money, Power and Corruption/Pay No More*: 10" EP

It's been fuggin' ages since I've come across anything by these cats and it appears that—in addition to their

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stubborn desire to remain ■ mystery (what little info that can be gleaned from the internet points to Finland, and that's pretty much it)—they're still cranking out some swell tuneage. A double-EP this time 'round, one on each side. Hardcore is definitely an arrow in their quiver, used not to ratchet tempos, but rather to add noise and immediacy to what is probably best described as punk with some industrial undertones. The songs are infectious without being saccharine, anthemic without being blustery. Good to hear they're still stomping terra in fine fashion. —Jimmy Alvarado (No address listed)

GIUDA: *Get It Over: 7"*

Are there folks left who are unaware of the glam stompin' sounds of Giuda? This is a reissue of an early single from the mighty Italian band and the A-side features one of the very best tunes of their first album, sounding even better at 45 RPM. Flip side song "Kidz Are Back" has ■ bit of a fast rockin' pub rock feel to it and makes for a great companion to the A side stomper. This band has been simply fantastic since day one and now one can get ahold of this early single for a very reasonable price. —Mike Frame (Got Kinda Lost)

GLIB: *Demo: CS*

A new band from the land of song, Wales. However, there is a distinct lack of melodicism from a quintet which seems more at home taking a Black Flag type approach to what

it's doing. I know it's sometimes a cliché to namecheck Black Flag, but it's definitely relevant here with Glib offering a nihilistic take on music, with hardly a care given for those on the receiving end. One other noteworthy comparison would be Christ On Parade, if that band was slightly less manic. This both bludgeons and boxes ears as it thunders along, but is blessed with ■ mix that delivers ■ clean-yet-tough, sludgy sound. An extremely promising debut. —Rich Cocksedge (Self-released, theglibcampaign.bandcamp.com)

GOOD SHADE: *Way Out: LP*

A bit of a curveball here. At its core is punk/power pop, but it's wrapped up in tense new wave, '70s rock—and some other influences that add a bit of dissonance and offbeat chord progressions—and the whole thing is delivered with sharp-as-razors delivery and multi-part harmonies so perfect the whole thing feels almost uncanny. You can almost feel the sweat from the work they've put into this. Kudos all 'round. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

GUITAR WOLF: *Love and Jett: LP*

Guitar Wolf are on their thirteenth album with *Love and Jett*. They consistently tour promoting album after album of way-overdriven rock'n'roll and destroying stages like leather-clad deities. There have been a lot of trends in lo-fi in the years since their first album *Wolf Rock* was

released. Guitar Wolf keep the rock alive, even if their albums sounds similar. Aside from loud chords, this record contains a lyrics sheet in English. "Sci-Fi Brat" travels at full-blown speed: "a primordial kaiju appears/ orange lightning strikes the sky/ the dark streets are all I see/ I'm just ■ rock'n'roll lover." "Bowling in Takada-No-Bada" is ■ call for the band to bowl as they have trouble hiding from the "arrogant sun" on a Sunday afternoon. "I'm gonna stick my fingers in them white hot holes/ Go, go, go! Go, go, go! Go, go, go! Strike!" I didn't pick that segment for the double entendre; I think he's more espousing the R'n'R lifestyle. I hope that's how they always live. —Billups Allen (Third Man)

HAMILTONES, THE:

The Shape of Walter: 7"

This top-notch surf record is made all the more fun by the record cover, which is a parody of Guillermo del Toro's Oscar-winning *The Shape of Water*. The cover shows Walter, a humanoid amphibian much like the one in del Toro's film, slobbering it up on a grimy chair with a TV tray full of fast food and bongs and such. Walter's shape is not-so-great, but the tunes on this record certainly are. —Emma Alice Johnson (Self-released)

HAÑBA!: *1939: CD*

Folk polka cabaret punk... that's on a boat(?) and it's is so theatrical and bizarre it's weirdly awesome.

I truly don't know anything about this genre, or if it even exists before Hañba. Worth checking out if you like polka punk, cabaret, anything close to Zydeco, or boats. —Camylle Reynolds (Antena Krzyku / Karoryfer)

HARRINGTON SAINTS:

1000 Pounds of Oil: LP

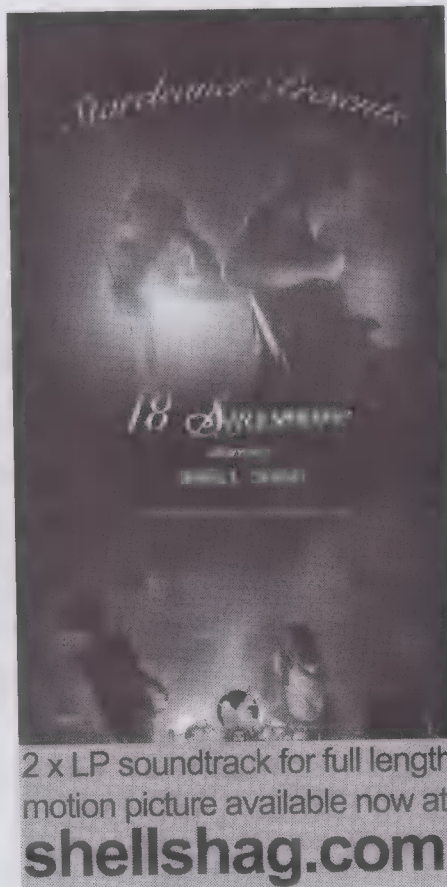
There are no smoke or mirrors here, folks. The cover of this one tells the story of what's to come: songs you can pump your fist to, drink pints to, and chant along to. Although this kind of pub punk has been done before, it's done well. —Ryan Nichols (Pirates Press)

HARSH R: *Physical World: CS*

What we've got here is a seven song cassette full of industrial/EBM type stuff that sounds like pure 1995 to my ears. It is incredibly well done but this style has never been my thing in any way, and that appears to still be the case two decades later. If you are aware of the music genre that is referred to as "harsh industrial" and are inclined in that direction, you would likely absolutely love this. —Mike Frame (Harsh R, harshr.com)

HASH REDACTOR: *Drecksound: LP*

Members of Ex-Cult and Nots playing groovy post-punk with sharp guitars, warm bass, and snide, spoken vocals. It's energetic and raw and should totally scratch your itch if you've already worn out the dozens upon dozens of The Fall's albums that sound just like this. —Chris Terry (Goner)



HELMS ALEE: *Noctiluca: 12" LP*

For my money, this is the best band in the Northwest right now. And I say not because they aren't good elsewhere but because they are so deeply Northwest. They are dark, stormy, heavy, and verdant. This record is just as heavy but more experimental than 2016's *Stillicide*, with more front and center vocals from bassist Dana James and (absolutely fucking stellar) drummer Hozoji Margullis. I once had someone tell me that Ben's vocals sound like he is singing in a cave in space and this is so true and beautiful. This band rules so hard and if you miss out on this record, you have done yourself really dirty. —Theresa W. (Digital Regress)

HILLVIEW: *The Law of Averages: CD*

Hillview plays fairly standard melodic hardcore, but that's not meant to be taken as a fault—what they do has certainly been done before, but they do it well. It's a good record with some catchy riffs and speed and aggression in spades. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Morning Wood)

HIP PRIESTS, THE: *Stand for Nothing: CD*

Dubbed by the band as their "Magnum Opus (Hopeless?)," *Stand for Nothing* is the latest in ■ large catalog of releases for The Hip Priests. Since their inception in 2007, the band has put out over twenty releases. If *Stand For Nothing* is indeed going to be the band's last hurrah, as they allude on the back of the album, the band is certainly exiting on ■ high note with

this collection of ten punk'n'roll bangers. Tackling topics ranging from political to personal, The Hip Priests back their messages with tightly written songs packed with catchy riffs and leads. If you're not banging your head, call for the Priests, because you might be dead. —Paul J. Comeau (Digital Warfare)

HONEST THIEVES: *Ineptitude: 7"*

A great name for a band and an equally great title for its first release, as I love the word "ineptitude." Thankfully, the music continues the positivity which those two elements raise in me. The opening track, "Open Letter," kicks off with ■ crisp guitar riff, subsequently joined by the rhythm section as it dives headlong into an invigorating one hundred and thirty-one second punk romp. Lyrically, the single seems to contain a dark theme from a personal perspective but all four tracks, especially the excellent "Defeated," provide me with ■ real shot to the arm due to the anthemic sound, much at odds with those lyrics. I highly recommend this record. —Rich Cocksedge (Brassneck)

IMPERIAL WAX:***Gastwerk Saboteurs: CD***

When Mark E. Smith of The Fall passed on in 2018, the remaining members of the band (who had been with Smith for eleven years and six albums) decided to continue to play together, but under ■ new name: Imperial Wax. I'm not ■ huge fan

of The Fall, but am impressed with Imperial Wax. Perhaps I never got into The Fall because of Smith's vocals, whereas I prefer vocalist Sam Curran's voice. It's got a reminiscence of Devin Ocampo of Faraquet and Justin Moyer of Antelope, both now-defunct bands on Dischord Records. Some of the songs have a good swing to them ("Plant the Seed") while others have ■ twang ("Turncoat"). But they're all couched in ■ post-punk sound that fans of The Fall will most likely enjoy. I found the whole thing a pleasant surprise. —Kurt Morris (Saustex)

J ROBBINS: *Un-becoming: 12" LP*

I have been eagerly awaiting this release, which the Jawbox reunion shows are following up quite nicely. It's everything I wanted from this long-awaited J. Robbins' full-length; his distinct voice floating over the deceptively smooth, complex songwriting. Super stoked to hear Gordon Withers's strings contributions on this one, a perfect match to Robbins's more jagged style. I feel like for years we've been graced by all the records he's helped shape on the production and recording side, so it's great to finally get something where he is front and center. Robbins is a master and these songs attest to that—catchy, heartfelt, and compelling. I'm so happy to have this to usher in the summer. —Theresa W. (Dischord)

JACKETS, THE: *Queen of the Pill: CD*

The Jackets are ■ Swiss garage rock band and I have to say I pretty much

fell instantly in love with this album. I won't claim to be an expert in the genre (there are already so many pretentious weirdos flexing that), but I can say that I've always been a fan. The Jackets sound legit, make my ear holes happy, and that's good enough for me. I will say that I was mildly disappointed when that rocking song about Steve McQueen was actually called "Steam Queen." This is their fourth album, so I am about to search out the other three. —Ty Stranglehold (Voodoo Rhythm)

JACKETS, THE: *Queen of the Pill: CD*

The Jackets sound like the raucous offspring of The Cramps and The Deadly Snakes reared by a young Grace Slick and Glenn Danzig, who then leave the ravening teufelsbalg at day camp with The Sonics. This is a fantastic record, and one that anyone with even a modicum of affinity for dirty, trashy rock'n'roll would do well to pick up. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Voodoo Rhythm)

JONNY MANAK & THE DEPRESSIVES: *Anybody Wanna Skate: LP*

I know I should think this basic skateboard-focused punk'n'roll record is corny, but I don't. Maybe it's that Jonny Manak & The Depressives not only know how to write a good hook but make it look effortless. Maybe it's that summer has finally arrived in the Northeast and it's sunny and the top priority is having a good time. And if there's a record centered around



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having ■ good fucking time, it's definitely this one. —Matt Werts (Gods Candy, godscandyrecords.com)

KOMPLIKATIONS: No Good News: 12"

A relatively minimalist approach from this Belgian electro-punk trio, featuring just vocals, a synth, and drums for a five track release. The vocals are really strange, as they sound like a mix of Belgian and Cockney, which actually works quite well. The synth and drums provide a melodic, staccato backing over which the vocals pour forth with political, societal, and personal tales. The most telling track is "Reflections," which deals with the death of a mother. It's ■ poignant song which manages to quell the jaunty nature of the synth a touch. Not sure of what the longevity of this record is for me. Time will tell. —Rich Cocksedge (Rockstar, dk@rockstarrecords.de)

LASSIE: Yes! Like the Dawg: CS

Fucked up, sample-heavy German garage/post-punk. Definitely part of this newest wave of wacky post-Devo weirdos, with their squealy feedback and their dissonant, droning vocals. "The 4th Wall" gets into a fun groove before rolling right into the dystopian rock'n'roll nightmare that is "Zegway Cop." They probably wear cool sunglasses all the time. Just a freaky, trashy sound all around. —Indiana Laub (Self-released, lassie@mailbox.org, lassie.bandcamp.com)

LAST SONS OF KRYPTON / THE FOAMERS?: Split: LP

Two takes on absurdist goofball punk. Last Sons Of Krypton aim low and mostly hit their mark. They come off like small-townners who've heard a lot of records, read some books, watched some TV. There's a vague sense that they're kidding around but there are no actual laughs. The Foamers? are weirder, funnier, and more compelling. "I Drew a Dumbass" starts their side, and it's hyper and deconstructive and not all that serious ("Suck a saltlick/ hide a nosepick/ wait ta get sick/ wait wait til you diiiiie/ Snort ■ snowcone/ smoke ■ o-zone/ just go home/ go hide"), which doesn't prepare you for the for-real despair and mania and confusion that shows up later on. They almost go from Devo to Black Flag lyrically, while staying lo-fi and raw rock-oriented musically. You could call it inconsistent, though I'd argue it's oddly revealing. —Matt Werts (Plant Music Record Company)

LATTE+: Next to Ruin: CD

Come the end of days, I would love to be in ■ position to know how many bands were formed having been influenced by Ramones. Italians Latte+ has been knocking around for ■ couple of decades now and has nailed down a sound that is built firmly on the foundations of one the most influential bands, punk or otherwise, ever. Taking on board elements of Screeching Weasel and bands of that later era have given this

trio the ability to sound old and new in equal measure. Songs are easy to follow with song structures lacking any sense of surprise, yet this is one of the reasons why bands like this can succeed in using a formula that has been widely tried and tested. Unless you fuck with it in a big way, it should usually result in ■ winning outcome. I like this a lot; the guitar drives the songs well and they are also great to sing along too. It's all done very well and this should appeal to fans of the Brothers Ramone. —Rich Cocksedge (Phocomelic Music)

LAUNCHER / FREAKES: Split: 7"

No Front Teeth in the U.K. released this wonderful split of two of the best current Los Angeles bands, Launcher and Freakes. Each group has a snotty singer and clever lyrics, with heavy distortion on the guitars and vocals. It whizzes by with just two songs from each artist, clocking in at a total length of just over six minutes. I'd love to hear more new tracks from these two California gems, but it doesn't seem as though that wish is being granted at the moment. Seek this record out, as it's already allegedly close to selling out. It's an instant classic, and I say that with no hyperbole whatsoever. —Art Ettinger (No Front Teeth)

LEFT HAND DRIVE: Jailbait: 7"

Title track is a bouncy ditty based on the main riff of Cheap Trick's "I Want You to Want Me," with dumb lyrics about getting caught fucking an

underage girl. Flip, "Motorway Crow," is a more traditional rock tune about living on the road. Supposed to be ■ long-lost single by a band part of the "New Wave Of British Heavy Metal." Interesting historically, I reckon, buy largely unmemorable otherwise. —Jimmy Alvarado (Splattered)

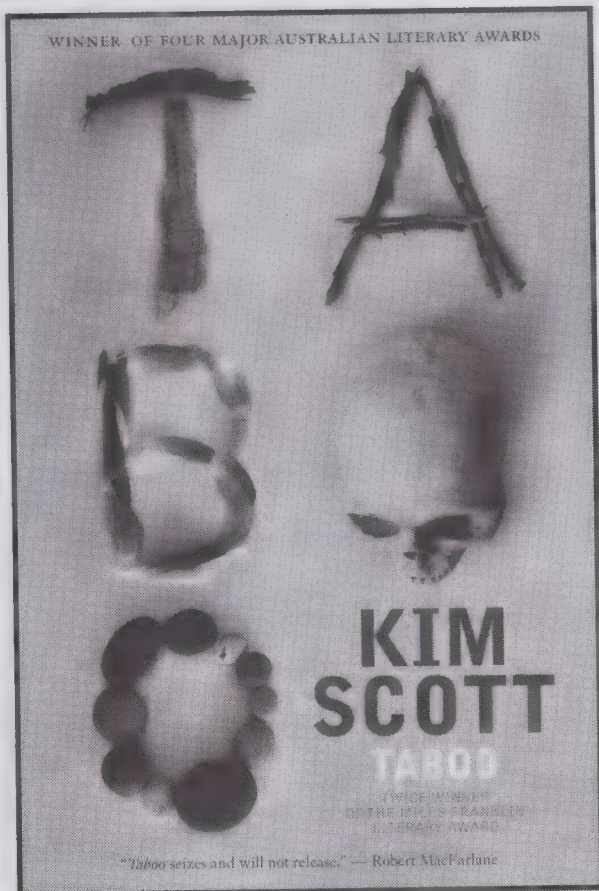
LEXICON: Demo: CS

This thing is on Iron Lung Records, so at least if it's not your style you know it's worth the ten minutes it will take you to listen to this. And worth your time this thing is. Charging, unrelenting USHC that reminds me of the Nazi Dust 7" in the vocals and overall tone of the record, but with layers of weird guitar leads all over it and a drummer who knows how to play heavy. With all the weirdo elements of this thing, it is still one hundred percent pure hardcore punk and doesn't play into cheap tricks or gimmicks, which is rare. If you are into other bands on the Iron Lung roster pick this up. —Ian Wise (Iron Lung, ironlungrecords.bigcartel.com)

LIFTERS:

Are You Ready for the Good Life: 7"

Though of more recent vintage, this sounds like some grade-A, long-lost punk gem buried nigh on forty years that was just waiting for some intrepid schmo to happen by, pluck it from its amber encasement, dust it off, and then wait for the bidding wars to start. Raw, yet accessible, gruff but catchy as hell, both tunes here deliver the goods in

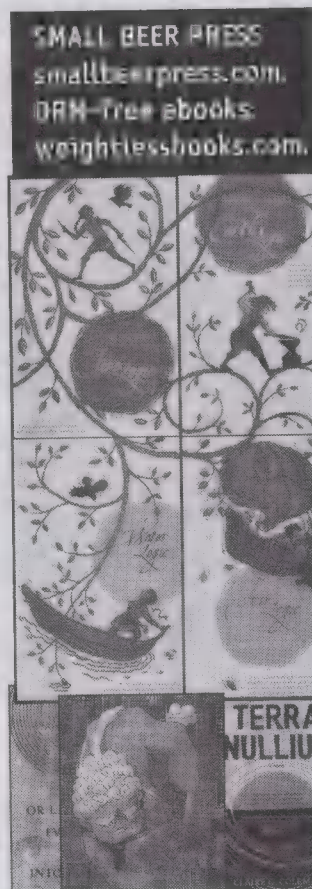


Kim Scott vividly conjures up how past history inflects contemporary Australian life, from rural landscapes to small towns and urban cityscapes in a chorus of voices that ranges from prison inmates and those just released, to young women and men whose whole lives lie before them. To honor his late wife's wishes, Dan Horton extends an invitation to the descendants of the Noongar people who were slaughtered by Horton's long-ago ancestor, to visit his farm where the massacre took place. In its exploration of the possibilities of decolonialization and reconciliation, **Taboo** is luminous, haunted, unflinching, and unexpectedly hopeful.

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spades. —Jimmy Alvarado (Uh Huh, facebook.com/uhhuhrecords)

LIINES: Stop-Start: LP/CD

This is one of those gems that crosses one's path totally out of the blue and subsequently becomes a firm favorite. This happened to me one Friday morning and resulted in me playing it over and over at work, and ordering the album after the first listen. Liines is a post-punk trio hailing from the once grey city of Manchester, now a beacon of modernity in the North-West of England. *Stop-Start* is a post-punk album lacking the dark broodiness often associated with the genre. Instead, it maintains a vibrancy which mixes well with the choppy guitar and the powerfully soulful vocals—both provided by Zoe McVeigh—eschewing a monochromatic feel in favour of something more colorful. I might be a full year behind the times with this release but I am so glad that I'm now up to speed. —Rich Cocksedge (Reckless Yes, recklessyes.com)

LOCAL DRAGS: Shit's Lookin' Up!: LP

A member of the Springfield, Ill. band Starter Jackets have turned out a new project called Local Drags, and you should probably be paying attention. I'm most certain it wasn't intentional, but I can't help draw a comparison to the band Superdrag. Name of the band aside, *Shit's Lookin' Up* sounds like the faster/better Superdrag songs. That's likely the best way to accurately describe them, I think (and if you're

not familiar with Superdrag, get on it). Big production, '90s-style American power pop, not your skinny tie stuff. Definitely more Fountains Of Wayne than, say, Paul Collins Beat, but I'm sure they dig both. Even the few corny lyrics that exist here doesn't take away from the magic of this LP. It's an incredible debut; just in time for the summer. Insanely well done layout and packaging, as with all Stardumb releases. —Steve Adamyk (Stardumb / It's Alive)

LOST TAPES, THE: Inconvenience: LP

Post-punk that at different times brings to mind The Cure and The Psychedelic Furs. It's got a gloomy feel to it, but the guitar sheds some brighter moments on proceedings, whilst the rhythm section is rock solid, itself verging into New Model Army territory on occasions. It's that latter quality that draws me in, creating an inescapable groove that I'm more than happy to reside in. My highpoints are "Without" and "Turn to Red," both of which are a bit more up-tempo and lighter in tone and, therefore, stand out a lot more. —Rich Cocksedge (Rockstar)

LUCY AND THE RATS: Stick to You: 7"

Lucy, of course, is Lucy Spazzy, of Melbourne's The Spazzys. She's since relocated to the U.K. and has been keeping busy, releasing multiple records and touring tons (including some dates with The Buzzcocks before Pete Shelley passed). I'm not

sure what the future of Lucy And The Rats are, but for at least this single, Joey has taken over lead vocal duties for two tracks and they seem louder and bit more upbeat than their last LP. We'll see what the direction they go in the future, but both are just fine by me. Beautiful packaging, as you can always expect from Stardumb and Surfin' Ki. —Steve Adamyk (Stardumb / Surfin' Ki)

MALA VISTA: Self-titled: 7" F

New York punk rock of most excellent vintage and execution—East Coast rock'n'roll swagger fueling one driving tune after another, many of which also have a bit of late-'70s Midwest feel to 'em under the chassis. Rock-solid top to bottom, tunes to (slightly blown-out) production. The grooves on this are gonna get worn out pretty goddamned quick, so here's hoping a long-player is on its way as well. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mala Vista, malavista.bandcamp.com)

MAX NORDIL: Go to Sleep, Fool: CS

This is what some noise musicians wish they could do. It's like someone trying to take their brain and map it in sound. And I think it fucking worked. I'm pretty high, but this tape is bringing me into a trance-like state, the kind that comes from laying on your couch in the afternoon while listening to the sounds of the city outside. I don't need to get into a big debate about the relationship of music versus art, but if I was trying to get

someone to listen to this tape, I would definitely describe it as the latter. Again, may be the weed talking but man, sounds are wild. —Theresa W. (Digital Regress)

MAZE: Self-titled: 12"

It always amazes me how Japanese artists have the uncanny ability to take a genre most take for granted and present it back with a breath of new life. Maze from Japan (not to be confused with the '80s Japanese new wave band of the same name) harness the beautifully flawed musicianship of bands like the Television Personalities and the Raincoats and turn it into something vibrant and refreshing in 2019. From the playful energy of the opener "I'm Gray" to the melancholic Joy Division-esque closer "The Cobwebs" every song paints a different picture of the sort of moods and feelings often associated with post-punk. I shared a couple of songs on social media and I got the most satisfying responses from friends who don't particularly listen to punk/DIY music. This record is so good that I almost started to feel guilty for spending so much time with it. —Juan Espinosa (Lumpy)


MIDWEST BEAT, THE: Incantations: CS

As the name may suggest, this is some hearty, wholesome rock music for the whole family. I've been hearing about this band for years but never bothered to check them out. I guess this is kind of a bad time to finally do that, since

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it turns out that *Incantations* is their farewell album after some fourteen years and a ton of releases. But this is nice—a bunch of upbeat, romantic Costello- or Kinks-styled love (or anti-love) songs, along with a few that sound more like '90s alt-country. My favorite is "North Country Trail," which sounds like a polished up old Bloodshot Records single. —Indiana Laub (No Coast, nocoastrecordings, bandcamp.com)

MISSING EARTH: Gold, Flour, Salt: LP With a cover like a '70s sci-fi paperback run through an AI texture generator, Missing Earth's debut doesn't look like an obvious indie rock hit. I definitely wouldn't have taken it for a direct descendant of Grandaddy's whimsical lo-fi pop. But that influence is all over this record—especially the contemplative opener "Galaxy," with cosmically crushing lines like "The Fata Morgana stands/ Massive and grey overhead/ Staring down some future when now/ Doesn't seem so bad." There's so much else going on here, though. The coolest thing about "Gold, Flour, Salt" is how it slips in and out of psychedelia without getting hazy or dull. The melody stays sharp, and the guitars are always swirling toward some mysterious source of tension. And then the smoke clears and a song breaks back into an up-tempo indie rock verse, and you might start to forget how weird things just got. But it's never long before the next curveball... like the

sludgy stoner chugging that bridges "Holy Death" and "Spectrum," ■ warbling instrumental that sounds like two ghosts singing to each other. Real cool. Listened to it three times back-to-back. —Indiana Laub (Salinas, salinasrecords@gmail.com, salinasrecords.com)

MOD VIGIL: Automatic Remorse: CD Are you still bumming about the passing of Jay Reatard? Have no fear; Australia's Mod Vigil is here to help. Reminiscent of a lot of bands on In The Red Records, the distorted vocals remind me of Reatard's work from *Blood Visions* while the music has more of ■ jangly guitar punk sound, something along the line of Toys That Kill. The sound isn't the most original thing in the world, but it's catchy and slightly dirty while retaining ■ pop sound. Many *Razorcake* readers will no doubt find something here to enjoy. —Kurt Morris (modvigil.bandcamp.com)

MOOD ALTAR: III: CD Although it's being sold as a dark, self-annihilating batch of electronic mood pieces, Luc Michalski (Black Panties) does ■ bit more than that with Mood Altar. He goes dark but there's a distinct sense of color and character to each song, and he seems to draw aesthetically from artists that fall outside the glue-sniffing community. Sometimes that's ■ general Kraftwerk/ Eno vibe, other times he reminds me of early Zomes, though he's less about a

kind of meditative repetition. He glides past the easy "moody electronics" designation and finds something personal and varied and real, which is something to celebrate. —Matt Werts (No Coast, nocoastrecordings, bandcamp.com)

MORE STUPID INITIALS:
■ out of 10 Doctors Recommend: LP Canada's '80s straight edge heroes get the full-length vinyl treatment. Collected are the tracks from both of their EPs and other assorted studio tracks, nearly all of which are heavy with mid-'80s East Coast thrash influence—blazing fast, topical, and pumped with humor. Includes a heavy stock insert with a band history, photos, zine reviews, and other assorted clippings. A nice homage for a band most have likely not heard of these days. —Jimmy Alvarado (Schizophrenic, facebook.com/schizophrenicrecords)

NADIR: Collecting Misery: LP Given the name and cover art, I pegged this as a dark, crusty hardcore endeavor, but no. Anthemic punk outta Queens with an aiming-for-the-fences delivery, simple but devastating guitar leads, and vocals that veer away from the gruff-but-sensitive template too often employed in this subgenre and go the more straightforward route. Good stuff throughout. —Jimmy Alvarado (Nadir, nadir666.bandcamp.com)

NATO COLES AND THE BLUE DIAMOND BAND / STATE DRUGS:

Split: CS

Believe you me, there's only one thing I like better than another STUPID FUCKIN' CASSETTE, and that's a STUPID FUCKIN' SPLIT CASSETTE! That said, let's move on. State Drugs are much less low-rent sounding than I had (for whatever reason) assumed; they sound a bit like something that would have been heard on college radio circa 1985, right after the student DJ played "Bastards of Young." They are, however, punker than *Tim-era* Replacements to the same degree that REM are less punk than *Tim-era* Replacements; punkish, but solid and three-dimensional enough to not be sequestered to the Sunday night punk show (for better or worse). And, while I don't quite buy all the way into Nate's current "High Priest of Jack and Diane" persona, I buy into it more than enough to get by, and have to admit he's ■ lot better at it than I would've imagined. Like, I don't exactly see him as Springsteen incarnate, but, then again, a Hammond organ patches ■ lot of ratty flannel. "Dangerous" is ■ soulful mover sure to fill the imaginary dance floor at the end of your soul; "Midnight in Memphis" might want to be the next "If Only You Were Lonely" but it's in 6/8 time and kinda fuck that. Despite the fact that this is a five-song cassette, it barely wound up offending me. BEST SONG: Nato Coles And The Blue Diamond Band,

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"Dangerous." BEST SONG TITLE: Either "Me & You vs. Everything & the World" or "666 Blah Blah Blah," both by State Drugs. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This is the coolest colored cassette housing I've ever seen, but don't get any bright ideas about the format. —Rev. Nørð (Motorcycle Potluck)

NECK: *You Don't Think It's Evil*: LP

Neck has cut out quite a little cult following for themselves in the last few years. So it's no surprise that their sophomore LP has been highly anticipated: ten Head-worship tunes from front to back. It's to-the-point, catchy, and is exactly what it needs to be. A "party" record, as they call it, in that the same songs repeat on both sides of the record, so you're just supposed to flip it and keep going. These veterans of the Ottawa scene (members of Garaga, Mumbleweed, The Visitors, Bitchin' Camaros) need no introduction in town, but it's been nice to see them recognized all over the world. "Electronic Dating" from the *Punk Rock Raduno* compilation LP starts this sucker off nicely, and before you know it the record is over, leaving you wanting more. —Steve Adamyk (Uncle D, vertigorecords.ca)

NEW ROCKET UNION: *Self-titled*: LP

This band sounds like Kiss: big riffs, mid-tempo drumming, middle of the road, basic rock. They're a two piece, one of those "unique stripped-down garage rock bands" that are

not so unique anymore. Sample lyrics: "She'll never be mine but I can pretend/ I fall apart when I see her face/ High heels, black stockings, leather and lace." Barf. Yo, dudes in bands writing songs about women, do better. —Kayla Greet (Ruzicka)

NO HOAX: *Black Out Tapes*: CS

Solid, old school, dark and raw punk rock, with a powerful vocalist that pleasantly reminds me of the late, great Mia Zapata. Recommended listening. —Chad Williams (No Coast, nocoastrecordings.bandcamp.com)

NO MEN: *Dear God, Bring the Doom*: LP

Wow. This album fucking smokes. Femme fronted, dual drumming powerhouse. The driving, hypnotic rhythm drives the whole album with Siouxi-esque vocals going from full bore screams to sultry whispers. It has elements of Jeff The Brotherhood with an almost buzzing stoner rock mixed with punk vibe, where less makes more. Impossible to categorize, this album is a journey, as if they wrote all the songs to fit into one linear path rather than ten songs thrown together. The opening riffs of "Mean Girl" explode into a ten-song rampage. Blood on your hands. It's mine. No Men. Chicago is burning. —Tim Brooks (Let's Pretend)

NOT A PART OF IT:

***Defiant Indifference*: 7"**

Snarly '90s-style punk from Eugene, Ore. that recalls an affordable Bay

Area with mischievous punx running through the empty streets and alleyways of your psyche. Spiky hair-era Swingin' Utters and Subincision feel like the immediate touchstones, with maybe some Cometbus projects to offer the philosophical foundations for why they do what it is they do. —Daryl (Next7 Exits, n7ebellingham@gmail.com)

NOTHING BAND:

***"Descension / Digestion"*: CD**

If you don't get Nothing Band, you might ask yourself, "Is this some kind of joke?" If you don't get it, you might think it's a lot of tuneless banging and screeching. If you don't get it, you might find it profoundly pretentious, thinking it's probably a bunch of art school dorks impulsively beating on instruments they don't know how to play and calling it transgressive art. If you don't get it, you might find yourself thinking any number of these things as you listen to *Descension / Digestion*. But if you were to ask me, I'd tell you, well, I couldn't tell you anything because I didn't get it. —Craven Rock (Decoherence)

OBSESSIONS: *"Killing Time"*

***b/w "Final Solution"*: 7"**

I'm having a hard time deciding on whether Obsessions are a post-punk band with garage influences or the other way around. Whatever the case is, both songs are earworms and have the ability to stay with you for days. They got me reminiscing of the

first time I heard bands like the Lost Sounds, Jay Reatard, and Criminal Code. Not bad at all. —Juan Espinosa (Static Blooms / Resurrection)

ONESIE: *Umpteenth*: LP

I thought this was going to be a straight Built To Spill/Dinosaur Jr. type of college rock-worship band, but then it took more of a turn for Beatles-influenced psych-pop. Maybe there's a lot of overlap there; I don't know. A little too clever for my taste, personally—just a lot of puns and quips and cute references propping the lyrics up, and the singer usually sounds like he's doing a voice—but Onesie know exactly what they're doing and seem to be doing it pretty well. I'm sorry, the guitar is just so wanky throughout this whole thing. Put it in the arty, smarty-pants indie rock bin for the nostalgic grad students who are looking for that. —Indiana Laub (Dadstache, dadstacherecords.com)

OUTCASTS, THE:

***Tell Me the Whole Story*: 2" LP**

A collection of this venerated Irish punk band's singles, 1978-85, remastered all nice and purty for your ears. Never quite achieving the "household name" status of The Undertones, U2, and Stiff Little Fingers, The Outcasts nonetheless held their own musically, with much more "street" evident than their fellow countrymen, and the diversity of tunes here show a maturation in craft without the slide into mediocrity so many of



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their punk peers ended up wallowing in. All the hits—"Love Is for Sops," "Mania," "Justa Nother Teenage Rebel," "Frustration," and so on—are here for your listening pleasure, along with assorted B-sides and such. Thumbs enthusiastically hoisted high. —Jimmy Alvarado (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

OVERDOSE: *Self-titled: 7"*

The single contains two songs worth of well-recorded, Motörhead-influenced rock'n'roll. The vocals are gruff. The guitars are tuned low. "Overdose" moves at a "pedal to the floor" pace. "On the Run" moves at half the speed with some good space rock soloing in play. The single comes in a simple white sleeve with Overdose written in an old English font. It's very classic looking: indicative of what's inside. It's a Motör-thöðex approach on all fronts, but if you miss Motörhead, these songs are reminiscent of the classic years. Well done. —Billups Allen (Splattered)

PATHOGENS, THE: *We're Catchy: LP*

Well, they certainly stick true to the name of the record with this full length—these fourteen new songs are very, very catchy. This Oakland five piece is helmed by dual vocalists Cinder Block and Jesse Luscious, who are both a large part of making these songs earworms. The other big part of their appeal for me is the guitar riffs. They flow from piercing leads to sharp solos and strong melodies. Many parts

of this LP sound like they could be lifted from X's catalog. They even have a song called "Johnny Hit and Run Jenny." Following that is a cover of Amy Winehouse's "You Know I'm No Good" that is less soulful and sped up a bit. It's different enough that it took me a while to place. "High and Dry" starts off with a Dee Dee-level "1, 2, 3, 4" and then charges along with what I thought was going to be a cover of "Chinese Rocks" but then settles into their own song. My favorite track is "Freaks on the Street," mostly because it's got a great tempo and really shows of Cinder's range. I'm pleased to see another solid release from these guys and can only hope for more. —Kayla Greet (Zafio)

PEACH PIT: *Live at Jumbo's: LP*

Detroit punks Peach Pit have an indie, folky sound. They describe themselves as pop punk but they are less the melodic, upbeat, fast-tempoed power chords with lighthearted lyrics and more like pop punk with a parental lineage that branches from The Replacements. I'd bet they have listened to a lot of Hüsker Dü. The album starts with a pop punk standard topic—a former relationship—but I appreciate how the lyrics have more to do with going to therapy than the usual "my ex is crazy" trope. "I Don't Want You Back" is almost a continuation of that story where the lyrical protagonist realizes their life is better without that partner. The song I enjoyed most was "Still Lazy," which starts with twinkly

guitars but builds to a riffy crescendo underneath a stream-of-consciousness reflection on life. —Lorien Lamarr (Salinas, salinasrecords.com)

PERSONAL BEST: *What You At: LP/CD*

This is the follow up to 2015's *Arnos Vale*, an album I picked up having seen the band a couple of times supporting Lemuria—perfect musical bedfellows—sharing similar indie rock/pop sensibilities. Fast forward to 2019 and *What You At* shows a progression to a slightly more slick, rock-sounding collection of songs but without losing the charm that its predecessor contained. Katie Gatt's vocals are stunning and she really adds life to the lyrics, many of which seem to deal with relationships, both good and bad. In addition, Personal Best now also includes El Morgan on guitar and vocals, resulting in some wonderful harmonies. I was taken aback at first by the different sound as it had a more rock-based drive but on repeated spins, it was clear that the indie pop edge was still there within the songs. A very good sophomore long player. —Rich Cocksedge (Dovetown, dovotownrecords.com / Sheer Luck, hello@sheerluckrecords.com, sheerluckrecords.com)

PETE BENTHAM & THE DINNER LADIES: *This Is Kitchencore: LP*

I first heard of this group while on a walking rock tour of the Lower East Side in New York City last summer as Pete Bentham himself was among

the sightseers. This is a six piece rock'n'roll band from Liverpool with punk ideologies and lots of saxophone. They stick to a shtick of '50s dinner style dress for the backup vocals and call themselves Kitchencore. Some of the influences and comparisons I hear in their big band punk songs are X-Ray Spex and Toy Dolls, plus some of The Sonics. The sax really sells a lot of these songs and it always makes me wish more bands would try horns and not just to go the ska route. This release is a gatefold vinyl record collecting their best efforts of the last decade, my personal favorite being "Goth Postman" not only for its ridiculous and fun premise, but those driving drums and powerful guitar riffs are just awesome. —Kayla Greet (Anti Pop)

PONCHES, THE: *Quit: LP*

When it comes to modern pop punk, the Italians (and Europeans in general) had this thing figured out a long time ago, and Toroni's The Ponches are no exception to the rule (and it's nice to see the rest of the world finally pay attention). It's fast, to-the-point, no-frills punk, mainly in the vein of a certain band that started out at CBGB's in the '70s. Seriously razor-sharp tunes. I presume *Quit* means the band is calling it a day, but don't quote me on that. Great stuff. —Steve Adamyk (Mom's Basement, momsbasementrecords.com / One Chord Wonder, ocwrecords.bandcamp.com)



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POUT: Present ■ Tense: CS

I'm not sure why there hasn't been an emo band named Pout before, but the name fits this Cincinnati, Ohio-based quartet perfectly. Emo might not be the best way to describe Pout's shoegaze-y garage rock vibe. They have a lot more fuzz and a lot less slick pop punk pretentiousness. This is just the thing for your next rainy-day playlist. —Paul J. Comeau (Let's Pretend)

PRIVATE VICES: Total Control: 7"

Two tunes comprising the only known recordings of this late '70s Franco-Brit punk band, both originally from an obscure comp and repurposed here as their "debut" single. Title track sounds like it was built off the Kinks' "Lola" then taken to logical punk conclusions—all hooks and drive—more Damned than Clash. The flip, "Paris 84," is another dose of revved up rock 'n' roll. These cats must've been a hoot live, if this is any indication. —Jimmy Alvarado (Splattered, speedwolf.bigcartel.com)

PROTRUDERS: Poison Future: 12"

Indie psych-rock from Toronto. If you like a lukewarm approach to post-punk, well then you can have my copy of this. —Juan Espinosa (Feel It, feelitrecordshop.com)

PURA CREMA: Fin de la Era: 7"

Title track is a decent bit of garage rock en español with the staccato effect on the guitars, flat vocals, and everything awash in fuzz and reverb.

The flip, "Balada Del Hipócrita," is more or less along the same lines, but oddly enough has a death rock tinge to it. Not bad. —Jimmy Alvarado (Static Blooms, staticbloomsrecords.com)

RADWASTE: End Times ■ Tape: LP

Radwaste were a mid/late-'80s Los Angeles post-punk supergroup of sorts. Formed primarily around the remnants of legendary groups 100 Flowers and 17 Pygmies, and later including members of X and The Weirdos, they took their cues from high school marching bands, employing four (!) drummers to provide the band's complex heartbeat. Though they only managed to release a single 12" EP, 1986's *Cooking and Nothingness*, during their initial run, they did record this, their debut full-length, in 1987-88, it was ultimately shelved until, thankfully, Happy Squid recently decided to dust it off, remix it, and make it available. It's an absolute stunner—both of its seed bands are well in evidence in the sound, coupled with a heavy funk undertow that hints at some Gang Of Four influence, and that intricate, layered drumming giving the whole thing an infectious propulsion from opener "Athena" to its closing cover of Brick's "Dazz" (the original itself ■ personal fave of mine). Dense, taut, mesmerizing, and seriously danceable, this is all but destined for inclusion among the many phenomenal releases to come out of L.A. County's underground. And,

to put a nice cherry on top, they're back together and making the rounds. Fuggin' sweet. —Jimmy Alvarado (Happy Squid, happysquid.com)

RECKONING FORCE: In My Head: 7"

Six tracks of early '80s-inspired hardcore. If you spend your days feeling like your mind is a prison, and the only escape is aggressive, primal, boot-to-the-head, East Coast hardcore; Reckoning Force have produced ten minutes of sweet relief. Feels very mid-'00s, which is a red-hot endorsement on this end. For fans of Poison Control and 86 Mentality. —Daryl (Not For The Weak)

REIGNING SOUND:

Abdication...for Your Love: LP

You might remember a weird minute when Toyota got a Mohawk. Toyota tried really hard to "relate" to the young ones in a way that would insert their ugly, boxy car into young America's lifestyle. This excellent nine-song Reigning Sound offering was swept up in the "make Scion hip" wave and released under the "Scion" record label, eventually to the detriment of the fans because the album went out of print quickly, becoming both hard to find and expensive. Merge has stepped in and made the album available to us non-Scion drivers. Reigning Sound is a consistently great band. This material doesn't represent a change in style or lifestyle like many "lost albums." This is just nine more from a group waving the flag for a

long time without trapping themselves in a retro-pattern. The album begins with "Lyn' Girl." It's a jumper with a danceable, double snare slap beat and ■ whirling keyboard riff. "Everything I Do Is Wrong" follows: a slinky, late night offering you could imagine coming from The Zombies. "Can't Hold On" kicks off with a driving keyboard riff and some solid soloing, leading into a cleverly assembled long chorus exemplifying the band's quality songwriting. If you buy this album because you like the band's output, you won't be disappointed. If you feel you bought a Scion because of The Reigning Sound album, I'd love to hear more about it. —Billups Allen (Merge, mergerecords.com)

REVENGE: 12" EP: LP

The record contains two sought-after 7"s recorded in '78 grabbing high prices on the old internet. "Our Generation" moves at a clodding pace with angry, cockney-tinged anger blaring through the speakers. The song utilizes an excellent, full-on thriving beat with extremely literal guitar chords and bass thump landing on the beats. It's hard driving. Irate. A little ahead of its time in its use of full-on, transparent anger without leaning too far into oi. "We're Not Gonna Take It" edges into a slightly more "of the time" approach with a triumphant and catchy chorus of "We're not gonna take it/ Oh no" that could have been written by The Buzzcocks but probably would have been more



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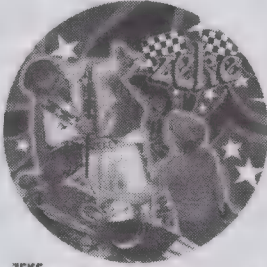
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When you notice Prostitutes frontman Kevin Patrick McGovern calling a record "the album of the decade...catchy, psychotic and ■ with punk rawk rage. Five out of five stars" you ■ to sit up and ■ notice.



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rehearsed had The Buzzcocks done it. The songs are clever and the band stretches themselves just a bit to get the songs recorded. If you like a little "could almost fall apart" in your punk, the album is a no-brainer. Another plus is the website credits Mikey Young for the mastering, and he should be commended, 'cause I turned it up and it sounds good loud. It's like you're there. You'll love it. —Billups Allen (In The Red)

RICHARD VAIN: *Night Jammer*: LP

Equal parts punk, post-punk, gray new wave, drone, and psych all mooshed together to make songs that are catchy and, dare I say, danceable yet still creative and challenging to anyone who prefers their saccharine pop spoon-fed to them. Nice melding of sounds and styles into a cohesive whole. —Jimmy Alvarado (Big Neck)

SAD GIRLZ CLUB: *Hard Feelings*: CD

When they get to the chorus of the first track "Ex-Men," I felt like I was listening to a mash up of two different bands. Then the second track switches to deeper male vocals with female harmonizing over a bright guitar riff. Most of the songs sound heavily Auto-Tuned and remind me of Teen Idols' *Pucker Up*. I feel that I'd rather hear more raw emotion in the main singer than a doctored version. Lyrically, they're catchy and introspective. Musically, they're fast with crooning melodies layered over. I went ahead and watched some

live videos online and those songs sound so much stronger without studio magic on them. So I suppose my only fault with this record is the production. Otherwise they're a band that firmly straddles the line between pop and punk. Definitely the kind of band you would find at Fest. —Kayla Greet (Bomb Pop)

SCHWUND: *Technik Und Gefühl*: LP

German minimalist synth-wave. More Suicide than Devo, but with a stronger sense of melody in the keys amid largely spoken vocals. —Jimmy Alvarado (Phantom, phantom.tk)

SCIENTISTS, THE: *9H2O.S102.12"* EP

I have read a lot of good things about The Scientists over the years, so my expectations were somewhat high. I was expecting to hear something that would cause me to react like, "Why wasn't I listening to these guys thirty years ago?" Unfortunately, that did not happen. What I'm hearing on this record is pretty underwhelming. I imagine Jon Spencer drew inspiration from The Scientists, but Jon Spencer did it much better. The elements for some great songs are all there: pounding drum beat, stripped-down, no muss, no fuss song structures, a vocalist who sounds like he's coming unglued, and yet these songs are just okay. —Matt Average (In The Red)

SECRET SMOKER: *Dark Clouds*: LP

It's been several years since the release of Secret Smoker's excellent first LP,

Terminal Architecture. The emo trio's follow-up, *Dark Clouds*, has the added benefit of being more aggressive than their previous full length. The Baton Rouge outfit shares the hardcore spirit of emo pioneers Embrace and Rites Of Spring. The hair-trigger vocals, although buried in the mix, are an exposed nerve and the twitchy, spastic guitars create an anxious energy. For twelve songs, Secret Smoker bring the feels but also fearlessly explore their anger. Relentless and cathartic, *Dark Clouds* is for emo fans tired of hearing that their beloved genre has no teeth. —Sean Arenas (Belladonna, belladonna-records.com)

SEXUAL JEREMY / COQ: *Sex Tape*: CS

This split tape takes me back to the early 2000s weirdo post-punk scene, almost in a Troubleman Unlimited way. Sexual Jeremy go way too hard into atonal proggy free punk, though in the current musical climate, where everything needs to be chill and recognizable, that approach feels slightly liberating. COQ are the real winners. They turn lo-fi no wave impulses into hits, and even make "Day Tripper," seemingly played from vague memory in one take, sound deeply radical. —Matt Werts (Crass Lips, crasslipsrecords.org)

SIKNOTES:

Welcome to the Party Pal: CD

Playing self-proclaimed "party punk," the Siknotes sound like an unapologetically drunken version

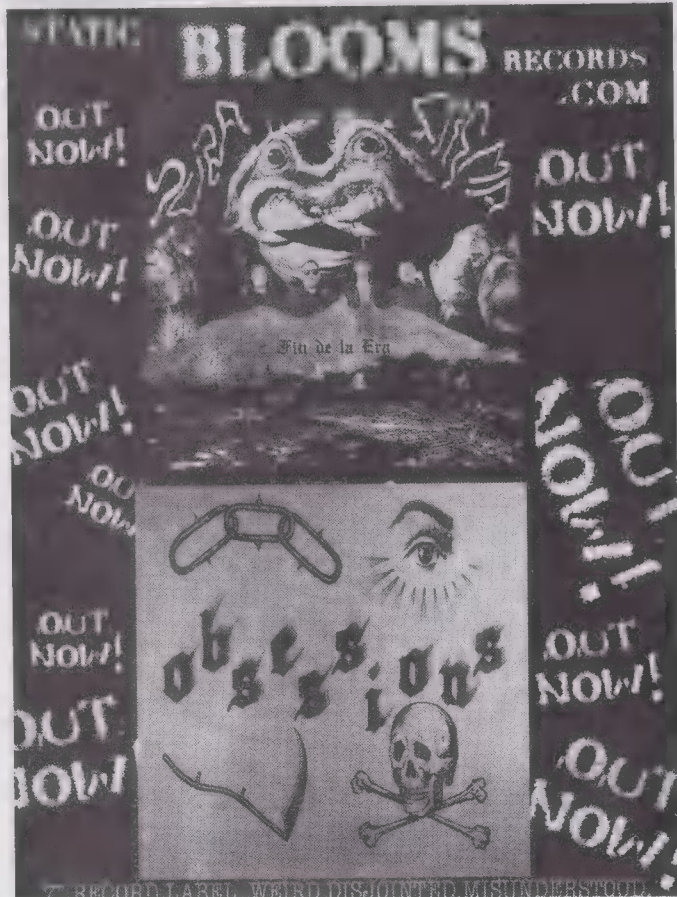
of early Face To Face. It's fun and I approve. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Morning Wood)

SINISTER PURPOSE: *Aces Low*: CS

I would like to start this review off by personally apologizing to the band and the label because I reviewed this like four months ago, but my computer crashed and I lost the review. That being said, I would have just let this float off into Razorcake-obscure if I didn't really like it. This is really awesome metallic rock-inspired punk. They hit a good stride when they put in those Richmond-style drum beats, but I really dig the rock'n'roll aspects of this. The riffs are cool without being overplayed and the vocals have zero posturing. This is a band that would be just as at home on a punk gig, hardcore gig, or a metal gig. I'd call out a specific song as a hit, but, hell man, they're all rippers. Denim jackets and sick riffs. Smoke a bowl and rock'n'roll, you feel me? —Ian Wise (Vinyl Conflict)

SKINNY GIRL DIET: *Ideal Woman*: LP

Mix of rock and grungy punk, reminiscent of similar musical ideas of the late '80s/early '90s. Things sludge darkly along, but they work dynamics to their advantage and opt to keep the lyrical content simultaneously personal and topical instead of vapid and insipid, which seems to be de rigueur anymore in rock. Me gusta mucho. —Jimmy Alvarado (Happy Birthday To Me)



SLAUGHTERHOUSE CHORUS, THE:
... In the Name of Progress: 12"

This is the swansong from The Slaughterhouse Chorus, and it's a shame to hear the band is coming to its end. I latched onto the band in 2012 and have since been a firm fan of its blend of cowpunk, Americana, and country since then. However, all good things must come to an end and The Slaughterhouse Chorus goes out on a high note, with five tracks offering a high quotient of foot-stomping fun and infectious riffs. Lyrically, the themes follow what one might expect from the genres, with tales of living paycheck to paycheck coming to the fore. Some of the guitar work reminds me of Lone Justice, a band I have loved for decades. —Rich Cocksedge (Built4BBQ, Built4bbq@gmail.com, Built4BBQ.com)

SOUL GLO: The Nigga in Me Is Me: LP

Cathartic hardcore from Philadelphia. Maniacal vocals backed by the resulting sounds of a head-on collision between (early) Daughters and Wrangler Brutes; a little noise and industrial influence never hurt no one either. The lyrics alone are one masterpiece after another with several punches to the gut, such as that of disillusionment with so-called allies in the scene ("Trickle down indie rock loves rap, white DIY is a dead end path and y'all can have that bullshit back"), the realities of living in a police state, and the lack of a willingness to put up with any more

shit that comes with being a band with POC in a predominantly white scene. As a person of color, the words hit pretty fucking hard and made me realize just how much more work is needed in even the safest of spaces for marginalized artists. Then again, the music and lyrics on this record are anything but safe and that's what I fucking love about it. This will prove to be a very important recording in modern hardcore punk history, perhaps even replacing the tainted legacy of Bad Brains. But only if you shut the fuck up and listen. —Juan Espinosa (SRA, soulgloph.bandcamp.com, srarecords.com)

SPOILERS:

Recently Re-Released: LP/CD

This collection came out on CD last year but is now being given a vinyl release. Spoilers do a damn fine job of sounding like the child of Snuff, with enough bounce in its songs to put a spring in my step. I'm not entirely sure of the need for this release, but it does have three acoustic tracks that some fans might enjoy. As much as I like the band, they don't really give me the same feeling I get from the effect of the band in full rock mode. However, on the whole, this gives me a huge shot of adrenaline, so it gets a thumbs up from me. I have a final question: has the band deliberately appropriated part of the intro to Hüsker Dü's "First of the Last Calls" within "Who's to Blame"? —Rich Cocksedge (Brassneck / Boss Tuneage / Little Rocket)

STATE DRUGS:

Takings and Leavings: CD

There's a really good late-'90s/early 2000s nostalgia going on here, mostly due to the vocals. This debut full-length from the Denver-based State Drugs could have easily fallen into the hole left by the Gin Blossoms (does it need to be filled?) but the punk undertones—including grittier guitars and faster drumming—reminds me more of later less-gruff Samiam, The Gaslight Anthem or, a personal favorite that I think is criminally overlooked, Gratitude. As The Replacements cover that ends the CD attests, State Drugs' bread and butter is the combination of edgy and familiar: the combination of urgent time signatures, tight rhythm turnarounds, good vocal production, and catchy songwriting make this a good one to keep rattling around in the car when you need a pick me up that isn't sugary sweet. —Theresa W. (Jigsaw)

STEREO CREEPS: Suck: LP

Seattle-based rock band that would have fit right into that early '90s scene that mixed the punk rock'n'roll of bands like Rocket From The Crypt and Murder City Devils with the grungier stuff like Mudhoney and Nirvana. *Suck* is a solid record with hooks and enough twists and turns to maintain interest, although a few songs do drag, necessitating a "let's move it along" needle pickup and re-drop. —Chad Williams (Deepskull, stereocreeps.bandcamp.com)

STEVE ADAMYK BAND: Paradise: LP

Punky pop, and vice-versa, with brick-solid songwriting, spot-on performances, and a production that hits the sweet spot between gruff and accessible. Bangers from start to finish with huge power pop hooks providing the grace notes. Definitely hits the spot. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

STREET HASSLE:

"Rejection Blues" b/w "Sugar": 7"

These Portland punks don't need no picture sleeves! Named after a Lou Reed album, this is a two-song 45 of mid-tempo power pop stuff à la Tranzmitors or 1970s Boston miscreants The Neighborhoods. Nicely done, if a smidge thin on packaging. —Keith Rosson (Discourage)

SUCK, THE: IN-COG-NEAT-O: LP

Debut long-player from The SUCK, an American pop punk band, both in geography and sound. "Long player" might be a stretch, since this 12" is over and done with before you know it, but that's the intention. These guys aren't new to the scene—those in the know will recognize a few familiar faces—but this outfit seems to be where they're focusing their attention at the moment. Ramones to the max. Selling like hot cakes it seems, so if this is your bag, I'd move quick. —Steve Adamyk (Mom's Basement)

SUN-O-BATHERS: Local Warming: CD

Let's take a time travel trip to the early '90s. I feel like that is what

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Dutch band Sun-0-Bathers is doing. If this came out in that era, they easily could have shown up on Burning Heart or even Epitaph. They play super melodic punk with that galloping drum beat you are hearing in your head right now as I am describing them. Satanic Surfers or Ten Foot Pole come to mind (and oddly enough there is a tribute song on this disc to TFP singer/pro baseball player Scott Radinsky). Probably not an album that I would put on with any regularity, but definitely one that I would pull a song or two from for a mix tape (a pastime of mine back then). —Ty Stranglehold (Morning Wood)

SWEET JAP: *Be My Venus*: LP

A brief—nine songs!—collection of unreleased tunes and rarities from this long-gone Twin Cities juggernaut. Each song here is delivered as blunt force trauma, all loud guitars and swinging rhythms, stomping and swaggering on the fine line between punk and rock, demanding you wiggle whilst smashing things to tiny little bits. Their legend is long and this collection demonstrates just why such veneration is warranted. —Jimmy Alvarado (Big Neck)

SYMPHONY OF DISTRACTION / 69 ENFERMOS: *They Came from Faster Space*: CD

They Came from Faster Space is a melodic skatepunk split from California's Symphony Of Distraction

and Brazilian punks 69 Enfermos. The record is solid—fast drumming, thrashy riffs, and harmonious polished vocals you'd expect—all perfectly executed in twenty-five minutes of gregarious riot. Sandwiched on either end are the two standout tracks: Symphony Of Distraction's "Call It Off, Don," a demand for Donald Trump to step down for having "disgraced me and my country long enough," and 69 Enfermos' "Don't," which starts pointing out "if this is what they call democracy, they should be ashamed." This last track also had a strong Alkaline Trio vibe for me, but rougher, and possessing something Alkaline Trio's never had: a political message. This record is fun even if you don't listen for a message; but with it they earn an A+. —Lorien Lamarr (Morning Wood, morningwoodrecords.com)

TAG OHNE SCHATTEN:

***Ein Besserer Ort*: CD**

I really dig this German trio, whose name means "day without shadows" and whose album title means "a better place" (I think), but beyond that, I didn't bother to spend hours with my German dictionary to understand all the lyrics. They play jaunty yet somewhat melancholy pop punk with a sound reminiscent of the Barbecue Bites meets Jawbox. And as far as I can tell—my German is quite shaky these days—the lyrical content is aligned with that genre:

songs about relationships and day-to-day ennui. Not fully understanding the lyrics is only a minor problem, however; the bouncing melodies are enough to keep me going and then some. I enjoyed this so much that I'm tempted to relearn German just so I can get the lyrics in full and immerse myself in the entire package. —The Lord Kveldufr (Zygmatorn)

TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET:

***Stay Rad!*: CD**

I find most pop punk cringeworthy. Teenage Bottlerocket was a pleasant exception to this experience. While the music still leans towards the slickly produced pop side of the punk spectrum, the lyrics and vocals of Teenage Bottlerocket really sold me on the band. Lyrics range from witty and tongue-in-cheek, as in songs like "Creature from the Black Metal Lagoon," lampooning of black metal fans which you have to know black metal to understand, to more serious tracks like "Everything to Me," which deals with trying to be a punk rock parent to a preteen. If the humor of Teenage Bottlerocket's lyrics proves too sophisticated for you, the opening track of *Stay Rad!* is perfect for you: "You Don't Get the Joke." —Paul J. Comeau (Fat Wreck)

TIGER TOUCH: "Hawthorne Boogie" b/w "Berlin City": 7"

Straight up punk'n'roll out of Portland, but you wouldn't be wrong

thinking they came straight out of early '70s Detroit. MC5 worship with some of that Turbonegro swagger. If you dug the early 2000s sounds of the Hellacopters and all those greasers, you'll dig this lot. —Tim Brooks (Tyrannical Volts, no address listed)

TIM BUCHANAN WITH DUSK:

***Tim Buchanan With Dusk... And On His Own*: LP**

This is definitely not a punk record. This is a country album. I am out of my depth here. It sounds like Willie Nelson? Actually, I don't know what Willie Nelson sounds like. This sounds like what I think trying to mimic Willie Nelson would sound like. It's slow, meandering, folksy country with a moaning vocal. Honestly, I'm not sure why I'm reviewing this or why it was sent to Razorcake. I can tell Tim Buchanan is a white man because he felt perfectly comfortable wasting thirty-two minutes of my life. —Lorien Lamarr (Crutch Of Memory, crutchofmemory.com)

TIME OUT TIMMY:

***Essential Vol. 1*: CS**

About twenty songs of self-proclaimed "Wicked Good New Hampsha Punk" is what is collected on this cassette. The song "Animal" features Wimpy of The Queers on vocals and sounds as one might expect. The whole thing really reminds me of the late-'90s output of the Nobodys, the era after the first full length album. Anyone



who is super into the obnoxious side of The Queers or a big Meatmen fan would probably find a whole lot to like here. —Mike Frame (River Monster, rivermonsterrecords.bandcamp.com)

TOMCAT'S TORPEDO BAND / WARBOYS U.S.: Split: 7"

Members of these bands appeared in legendary Confederacy of Scum acts Hellstomper and ANTI-SEEN prior to moving on to various side projects. There's a lot to dig here, from the pristine production to the technical proficiency of the instrumentals. It's a split release between Chattanooga's Poorboy Records and North Carolina's Mystery School Records, with each label's copies having different cover art. Fans of Southern-tinged punk will absolutely adore this kick-ass record. Particularly graceful is "Old Broadman Hymnal," one of the Warboys U.S. tracks, which describes a young man in church channeling rock'n'roll in lieu of nonsense Christianity. Amen to that, today and every day. —Art Ettinger (Poorboy, tomcatboogie.bigcartel.com / Mystery School, mysteryschoolrecords.bigcartel.com)

TOMCAT'S TORPEDO BAND / WARBOYS U.S.: Split: 7"

Warboys U.S. have a southern twang to their brand of rock, which sounds like good ol' boys who grew up on Thin Lizzy and Skynyrd, but also love Johnny Thunders. Tomcat's Torpedo Band fit right in to the same FM, classic rock, windows down, on

the highway sound. —Ryan Nichols (Poorboy / Mystery School)

TOTENWALD:

Dirty Squats & Disco Lights: LP

If the Nuns or the Epoxies were German, used a drum machine, had a sax player and a penchant for the occasional foray into klezmer music, it might come close to *Dirty Squats & Disco Lights*. Comes with a million inserts and a full color poster of the band, all of whom look like extras from *Mad Max* if neon couture was more readily available. Kudos to the band for fitting highly political topics—war, gender stereotypes, religious intolerance—into a fun, buoyant, interesting new wave sort of framework. It's all a bit too theatrical for me, but they're most certainly good at it. —Keith Rosson (Plastic Bomb)

TRIGGER CUT: Buster: CD

This German three-piece is musically reminiscent of Unsane and Jesus Lizard but without the urgency of those bands. For example, Trigger Cut is slower and lacks the high power energy that I found on the latest Unsane album. The primary reason is that the guitar doesn't have the muscle needed to carry off a sound comparable to acts like the Melvins, but isn't mathy enough to fit in with a math rock sound which Trigger Cut also skirt the edge of. The singer reminds me of Rich Fessler, the vocalist of the now-defunct Chicago band Bear Claw (how's that for an obscure reference?).

It's got a desperate, wracked tone that is slightly muffled, too. None of this is to say Trigger Cut is a horrible band. Their song structures are good and they write some solid riffs. But their inability to decide what type of style they want to play—without being an effective hybrid, either—makes *Buster*, dare I say, a bust. (Insert groans here.) —Kurt Morris (Self-released)

TRINITY TEST: Self-titled: LP

Rock riffs plus old school hardcore punk is usually a killer combo in my book. And while there are enjoyable parts of this record (with a killer cover), as a whole it just doesn't click. Some parts are overly simplistic but lack power; some parts incorporate interesting licks but too often don't meld with the vocals. All that said, this seems to be Trinity Test's debut record, but which sounds and feels more like a demo. There's definitely potential here though, so I hope these Minnesotans keep at it and really push themselves in their songwriting, arrangements, and vocal dynamics. With that sort of progression and proper, professional recording, their next record could be a great one. —Chad Williams (FTWNU2, ftwnu2.com)

UPTOWN ACE:

Combine & Conquer: CD

Heavy, anthemic rock jams out of Melbourne that verges on hair metal at times. There's a lot of loud guitar going on that clashes with the sleepy

vocals. Parts of this just kinda drag for me. It never really catches my attention. Keep doing what you're doing mates, I'm just not your target audience. —Kayla Greet (High Kick)

URANIUM CLUB: Cosmo Cleaners: LP

I dunno whatever happened to bands and records like these—tight, precise, punk-spirited weirdos located too far in left field to be comfortably lumped in with the punks, and too locked in and energetic to be written off as merely self-absorbed purveyors of art/noise/goofiness. Maybe they all went into deep cover at the end of the '90s after Man... Or Astroman? released *EEVIAC Operational Index and Reference Guide, Including Other Modern Computational Devices*? I'll admit, that was a tough act to follow. They all probably needed a little Executive Time. Be that as it may, this band sounds like either a funny Shellac, a kitschy Brainiac, or if NoMeansNo joined the Church of the Subgenius and played arena rock versions of Minutemen songs (with the exception of "Michael's Soliloquy," which sounds like what one would imagine the guy from "Michael's Monetary System" by Eater would be up to these days). Screw lithium, uranium futures are where it's at! Keep that under your energy dome. **BEST SONG:** "Grease Monkey." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Definitely Infrared Radiation Sickness." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** I'm the only person I know who cares

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about what the redacted guest solo information really says. —Rev. Nørb (Fashionable Idiots)

VACATION: Mouth Sounds #2699: LP
Gritty Cincinnati punk, just dirty as hell. If Future Virgins tried to cover the first Black Flag EP but had to make all the songs at least two minutes long, it might sound something like this. Confident and catchy, big hooks and choruses, right on the cusp of a "garage rock" tag but a little too laden with unbridled propulsion, this thing just rips from the start. Wasn't expecting much from the cover art, but that's what I get for judging a book, et cetera. Or record, in this case. Whatever. Point being, it's good, check it out. —Keith Rosson (Let's Pretend)

VAN DAMMES: Risky Business: 7" EP
Ooh, now this came as a complete surprise and an extremely enjoyable one, too. Six tracks of high energy garage punk from Finland, providing a caffeine-like boost to the day. Songs race along at a good pace, allowing plenty of pop-fueled melody to come to the fore throughout. The standout track is definitely "Grand Slam Season," a tale of watching tennis on television and perhaps the only instance of the Spanish player Arantxa Sánchez Vicario being namechecked in a song. Game, set, and match to Van Dammes. —Rich Cocksedge (Rockstar, dk@rockstarrecords.de)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

American Noise Vol. 2: LP

A compilation companion to a documentary about Smart Studios featuring a bevy of bands that recorded there, many of which also happen to be the crème de la crème of late-'80s bands that moved from punk to help form the foundations of grunge and alternative rock—Tad, Cherubs, Laughing Hyenas, Die Kreuzen, Killdozer, Crucifucks, Cosmic Psychos, Young Fresh Fellows, The Fluid, Gumball, Urge Overkill, and The Singing Irishman. The surprisingly solid selection of sounds—noisy sludge, punk, pop, icy rock, proto-grunge, general silliness—highlights just how diverse and creatively rich that period could be, a period that often suffers the same curse of myopic hindsight as punk and hardcore. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Into the Outro: LP

Assorted hues of punk, garage, trash rock and such, courtesy of The Flytraps, The Slop, The Premonitions, The Osteoblasts, The Azmatics, Drac & The Swamp Rats, The Lungs, The Night Times, The Turbulent Hearts, King Flamingo, The Sound Station, The Southern Wolves, The 7 And 6, and Richie Ramone. Nice diversity in sounds and styles while maintaining basic rock'n'roll as the touchstone. Thumbs up. —Jimmy Alvarado (Outro)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Lest We Forget: 35 Great Old Berkeley Bands/Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk: 2 x CS

In 1991, Aaron Cometbus made a tape comp of songs from local punk demos that he'd collected in Berkeley between 1981 and 1988. "The idea was to take some of the spotlight focused on Gilman Street and redirect it on the groups from just a few years earlier who were being foolishly, almost criminally overlooked," Cometbus says in the new liner notes to the rerelease of this comp. The delightfully fuzzed-out and screechy songs that fill *Lest We Forget* come from bands that you've probably only heard of if you've been reading *Cometbus* for decades (Intensified Bluebeard, anyone?), and handily prove that Berkeley was a hotbed of quality melodic punk long before Green Day and Lookout! Records blew up. Speaking of Green Day, they executive produced the documentary *Turn It Around*, about Berkeley's Gilman Street scene where they got their start in the late '80s. The *Turn It Around* comp features rare tracks from that iconic scene's best-known names: Operation Ivy, Jawbreaker, Mr. T Experience, Spitboy, Neurosis, Filth, Blatz, and more. If the *Turn It Around* tape is the kid at school with a Green Day shirt, *Lest We Forget* is the kid who walks up to them in the cafeteria who says, "If you like Green Day, you'll love my friend's band. Wanna come see them this weekend?" These

two tapes make for an impressive (and daunting) collection of music, and a thorough document of a beloved music scene that plays the hits and shares a few surprises, too. —Chris Terry (1-2-3-4 Go!)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: **Shut the Fuck Up and Listen Vol. IX: CD**

The half-naked steampunk bondage girls on the cover set my expectations low. Most of what I heard did little to change that impression. There were two redeeming values to this. The Accused track "Gain Green," and the bright blue vinyl makes for a nice coaster. —Paul J. Comeau (Portnow)

VITNNA:

2 Songs + Live at the Hive: CS

The first thing I notice is the guitars sound exactly like Exit Order, so get past that because that's where the comparisons end. This is weird d-beat inspired punk (but they forgot the actual d-beat) that has some sick riffs and the absolutely most damaged vocals I can think of for a modern hardcore band. I didn't know it was possible to sound this bleak and heavy at the same time. Imagine the Rudimentary Peni singles filtered through Skeletal Family and played by Poison Idea. I know I just threw a lot at you. Catch it. —Ian Wise (Self-released, vitnapunx@gmail.com)

VOICE OF DOOM: **Cousin of Death: 7"**

This is a lathe cut, but it sounds really good for the format. This is

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amateurish (in a good way) punk with melodic vocals modeled after the Misfits (who they cover on here). The insert is a cute EC comics style drawing (or maybe a direct lift?) directing you to their bandcamp and fluffing them up a bit. It's not amazing, but I like it. They obviously aren't taking themselves too seriously, which I really appreciate at this point in punk. —Ian Wise (Pyrrhic Victory, voiceofdoom.bandcamp.com)

WANNA-BES, THE: Broken Record: 7"
Twenty years after The Wanna-Bes put out their debut CD on Ben Weasel's Panic Button Records, the band is back, and, honestly, sound better than ever. Production is important, as are lyrics (don't mess them up, kids), and these folks have those down pat on *Broken Record*. Of all the bands and records of this ilk, this might be the closest thing I've heard to true-to-form '90s, classic pop punk. Songs that actually sound like they're from that era (and maybe they were). Far from reinventing the wheel here, but that's okay. Pros. —Steve Adamyk (Mom's Basement, Momsbasementrecords.com)

WAR BISON: Acre: LP
Acre is War Bison's second LP, and I have to admit I've never heard of them before, even though I live in the Bay. We orbit in slightly different punk circles, but they've played

with the likes of Negative Approach, These Bastards, The Birth Defects, and War Crimes, so I guess I've just been ignorant to their presence. War Bison are a self-described "SF Hardcore" band with tightly woven melodies that cross the line between metal into hardcore thrash and back again. Their clear and focused vocals that enunciate every word distinguishes their sound from the usual grizzly, distorted thrash vocals. It's foreboding dark metal, and it's tough. —Camille Reynolds (Self-released, warbison.bandcamp)

WARSH: Demo: CS
Whoa. I might actually be getting excited about hardcore again? This thing rages full-on for a minute at a time before hitting these breakdowns that aren't your typical two-step "sway and stomp" stupid garbage that turned me off from modern hardcore. It's like the song will fall completely apart and then lurch forward again like a motor you have to turn over three times to get it to work, and in the meantime you are beating your head against the dashboard wondering if you're going to get to work on time. I love the vocals; they're not aggressive at all but sit in the mix so well they sound organic. I love the weirdo, single note riffing on "Greedy Hands." I love the handwritten note that came with this. Punks are still okay sometimes. —Ian Wise (High Trash Media, hightrashmedia.tumblr.com)

WEIRD NUMBERS: Minotaur Dreams: 7" EP
Weird Numbers is the current/new project of Zache Davis, the mastermind behind The Girls, and bass, slinger/vocalist in the incredible Maniac. This initial offering on Dirt Cult doesn't fall from the tree of his other bands, but has a bit more of a Marked Men/Radioactivity vibe to it (with a bit of SoCal garage flair in there as well). Four killer songs, with a fifth in the digital version only. A really great foreshadowing of hopefully much more to come. —Steve Adamyk (Dirt Cult)

WHISPER HISS: Everything Must Go: EP
Pretty good record here. Whisper Hiss play post-punk similar to Dunes, with their layered sound and dynamic compositions. The guitar sounds awesome, reminding me of Felt, where it's cool and otherworldly. The playing is somewhat minimal in the sense that there is zero indulgence. Everything here counts. The vocals build on that otherworldly sound from the guitar in a way that makes you want to stay in the moment forever. This comes with a download card that gives you access to three additional songs that weren't able to fit onto the record. You would be very wise to get this. —Matt Average (Whisper Hiss, whisperhiss@gmail.com)

WILDHEARTS, THE: Renaissance Man: LP/CD
Bloody hell, the opening track, "Dislocated," is the kind of

barnstorming blast of music many bands would be proud to call their own. It's a song on which all guns blaze from start to finish, a duration of almost six minutes. It really is a marvelous way to begin The Wildhearts' first album in ten years. Unfortunately, it sets the bar so high that nothing that follows comes remotely close to equaling it for that sonic punch and enjoyment. Yes, there are some strong tracks with guitars chugging and melodies aplenty but it's like I've been concussed and not able to take anything else in after the initial detonation. I won't profess to be a big fan of the band, but it does what it does well—straddling rock, metal, and punk and offers plenty of drive and punch. Personally, I believe there is a good EP to be found on this album. —Rich Cocksedge (Graphite, andy@northernmusic.co.uk, graphiterecords.net)

WITCHING WAVES: Persistence: LP
This record is gonna hit somewhere in my top ten of the year. It falls firmly in the post-punk category but there's an awful lot of imagination here. The duality of male and female vocals with London accents add a lilt to the powerful melodies they spit. Drummer Emma Wigham covers most of the ground vocally, with guitarist Mark Jasper taking lead on a few tracks. Though when they come together in choruses, it's hauntingly wonderful. Most all of the songs lyrically connect to the title *Persistence* in their own

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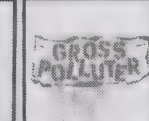


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specific ways. Personal finances, romantic relationships, mental health, underachievement, and keeping problems from getting the best of you are all facets of this diamond. And the music is so strangely beautiful. The guitar is so noisy, jangly, and seemingly out of control. It adds incredible depth to the pounding drums and low end of the bass. I'd say they're something akin to like Arctic Flowers, but ultimately they're arty and odd in the best ways. I keep changing my favorite song on every listen. That's the sign of a solid release. —Kayla Greet (Specialist Subject)

WITCHTRIAL: Self-titled: 12" EP

It's 2019 and it is fairly common for punks to grow their hair out and slap on a jean vest to go with their flying V guitar and be totally down with metal, but there was a time when you pretty much had to choose whether you were a fuckin' metal head or a hardcore asshole. Heshers thought punk was too weak and punks thought metal was clown shoes. Of course things are different now and no one looks twice at the person wearing a Bathory shirt to Damaged City fest. The eventual cross-pollinating of scenes has blessed us with bands like Witchtrial from DC who boast members of already well-established hardcore punk acts such as Ajax and Firewalker to name only a few. Witchtrial have taken the vilest riffs from early thrash heavyweights Possessed, Venom, and of course

Slayer (think *Hell Awaits*, not *Reign in Blood*) and rung them through the meat grinder of New Wave Of British Heavy Metal style flair where the drums explode, the guitars howl, and the vocals hold you in place. Six songs of genuine blackened thrash that you'll swear are already classics. Speaking of which, I once played a song from the Witchtrial demo 12" at a Razorcake DJ night which prompted my good pal Designated Dale Drazen to exclaim to me "Who the fuck is this?!" from behind the DJ booth. "Oh, right! Witchtrial!" he walked away saying. You know your band fucking rips when Dale is a fan after only hearing one song. —Juan Espinosa (Beach Impediment)

WOLFMANHATTAN PROJECT:

Blue Gene Stew: LP

When they're really on their shit, these pedigreed primitives (Mick Collins of the Gories/Dirtbombs, Bob Bert of Sonic Youth/Pussy Galore, and Kid Congo Powers of the Cramps/Gun Club) sound like a dirty Half Japanese playing songs off the Dirtbombs' *Ooey Gooye Chewy Ka-Blooy!* album. When they are somewhat less on their shit, they just sound like that band with no bass player that plays at your neighbor's parties sometimes. When they want to stretch their legs a bit, they sound like that band, but huffing uranium on Mars. They come off as the band in the neighbor's basement a bit more frequently than I would

have guessed, given their collective resume, but, like a Shane McMahon wrestling match, if you pay attention to the high spots, you can socialize obliviously during the rest of the performance and everybody has a good time. I cannot help but believe that, in some way, shape, or form, the party is in my mouth. **BEST SONG** "I Feel You." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Toynbee Tile Blues." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** This record is so pink and thick that you'll think it plays roller derby. —Rev. Nerb (In The Red, intheredrecords.com)

WORMTOOTH: Breach: CS

The business card included with this tape calls Wormtooth "dark industrial rap," and I guess that's accurate. Ten songs, well produced, comes with a bunch of stickers. Song titles include "Wring the Beast's Neck" and "These Are Our Demons, and Our Demons Are Loud." There's a song about Solomon Grundy? From DC Comics? Not quite sure what's going on here, or how much it will really appeal to the average *Razorcake* reader, but it's clear a ton of effort and care has gone into this, and there are definitely moments that're absolutely rife with atmosphere. —Keith Rosson (The Tesseract Society)

YALLA STOCKINGS: Young Cut: CS

And just like that, I'm obsessed. Gorgeous layers of beats and synths and voice. Alternating between

sparse and lush. Lyrics like drops of blood, swirling with life. This line has me tangled up: "Taking my time wasting time, looking at pictures that look nothing like me, hoping to find something of myself, but the things I'm not is all I can see." Maybe it's because I'm getting a rhinoplasty in a couple days and I'm putting all sorts of things into those words, but they have a grip on me, but I'm going to dance with them. And this tape is so danceable. Not bombastic dance club danceable, but like quiet alone in my living room, just moving and crying danceable, and I love it so much. —Emma Alice Johnson (Let's Pretend)

YOLKS, THE:

Get Back: 7" single

The Yolks serve up two staid garage rock numbers. "Get Back" is the most wound up of the two, and the vocals remind me of The Strokes (a band everyone loved before someone else decided they weren't cool anymore). "Vampire" on the flip is the most interesting of the two with its laid back late-'50s/early-'60s style, strummy guitar sound, and soft, shuffling rhythm. —Matt Average (Randy)

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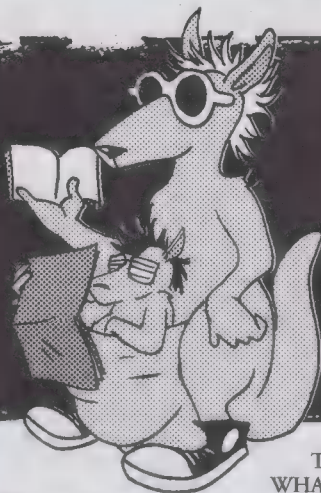
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God damn I love this
zine. I devoured two in
the course of an hour.

—Kett Kettner
LAST NIGHT AT THE CASINO #14 & #15

ADULT CRASH COMICS #2,

\$6, 10" x 7", full-color copied, 24 pgs.

Part of an ongoing series about Kettner's past life-altering experiences. In this issue, adult Kett cleans the house of an eccentric doctor whose house is filled with risqué artwork and morbid keepsakes. Kett accurately draws with detail the layout of the house along with its curiosities—including the photos of erections and *Snow White* keepsakes. The second story is a very young Kett dealing with several deaths in the family, all before kindergarten. Kett's artwork is cartoonish with photographic realism. It is a full color comic but only two colors are utilized: a soft purple for the first story and a coral/salmon color for the second. It's really quite nice to look at and Kett is up there with some of the disciplined punk comic artists alongside Nate Powell. —Rick V. (Jim Kettner, kettnerd.com)

ASYMMETRICAL ANTI-MEDIA #4, \$1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 8 pgs.

A review zine that covers other zines from all over the map—everything the author receives in the mail, apparently. Jason does a good job here; the reviews are pretty thorough and descriptive. Every time I see a reference to *Razorecake* in a zine I am reviewing for *Razorecake*, I think the pages are going to open up and suck me into an interdimensional fractal hellscape. This one even has a review of another zine review zine, so whoever is reading this now is really in trouble. —Indiana Laub (Jason Rodgers, PO Box 10894, Albany, NY 12201)

BLUE VELVET AND THE SHADOW SELF,

\$1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 8 pgs.

This appears to be an essay the author turned in for a film analysis class eight years ago. It includes a works cited page and opens up a few threads (not least of which is a cursory response to accusations of David Lynch's misogyny, jarringly crammed into the very last paragraph) that probably only make sense in the context of whatever the class was. I don't know that this really had to be turned into a zine, but fuck it, why not? —Indiana Laub (Jason Rodgers, PO Box 10894, Albany, NY 12201)

BROKEN PENCIL #83, \$7.95, 8" x 10½", magazine, 72 pgs.

A magazine of "zine culture and the independent arts." Packed from start to finish, this seasonally released publication presents its spring issue. Its cover feature is about guerrilla gardening, the origins, instructions on how to do-it-yourself, and an interview with a guerrilla gardener. 2019's top indie-writing winners (of a *Broken Pencil* contest) are featured, zine and book reviews, and a paper cutout stapler map is included. A good resource for checking out new zines when not at a zine fest! —Tricia Ramos (Broken Pencil, PO Box 203, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7 Canada)

CEMETERY MAPS, \$2, 9" x 12", printed, 64 pgs.

I love this. Over thirty different maps and different contributors fill out this giant love letter zine to cemeteries. Inside this perfect bound, oversized paperback zine are hand-drawn, detailed guides to different zinesters favorite cemeteries across the United States, Europe, and even one each from Mexico and Argentina. Every page features a different cemetery map, along with a short history of the cemetery, specific points of interest, and fun facts! As someone who has found peace in taking leisurely strolls through cemeteries, this zine is a goldmine of info for exploring them with new eyes and new insight! —Tricia Ramos (Cemetery Maps, amymartincomics.com)

THE CIA MAKES SCIENCE FICTION UNEXCITING #10:

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY? AN INTRODUCTION, \$4, 4¼" x 7", copied, 50 pgs.

This introduction to the Black Panthers gives some contextual info about 1960s civil rights and Malcolm X before discussing the Panthers' political platform and some key members. As the title implies, the focus here is more on the ways the government sought to undermine the party than a complete history. Still, this could work for folks who want to get their feet wet. —Michael T. Fournier (Microcosm, 2752N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227)

HOW TO BOYCOTT, 4¼" x 7", offset, 62 pgs.

Want to, as the subtitle suggests, "make your voice heard, understand history & change the word"? Well, you might try a boycott and this zine might help you out. It's not quite a step-by-step guide to boycotting, but it will tell you what a successful one looks like and how it began. Think "how to" not "how-to." It breaks down what boycotts are, going as far back as the Boston Tea Party and the 1808 tenant's strike against landholder Charles Boycott (an event where we get the term "boycott") to the Burgerville strike that's going on today. The main takeaway of this zine is defining what a true boycott is. It's more than simply saying, *I'm against this company so I'm not going to buy things from them*. Instead it's one that's "organized among a clear base of participants" and, more importantly is clear in what it asks of the oppressor. Some interesting parts of the zine talked about how Nike, a company who's boldly continued to use slave labor in sweatshops for decades was able to "redeem" itself by starting an ad campaign using Colin Kaepernick. This successful campaign worked well, presenting Nike as a benevolent company whitewashing the struggles of past boycotts while all the while they continue to use slave labor. If you want to organize and stick it to The Man, this comes highly recommended. Casual readers will also find an engrossing read. —Craven Rock (Microcosm Press, microcosmpublishing.com)

LADYHUMP #9, \$2, 5¾" x 8½", Laserjet, 46 pgs.

A photozine that appears to be put together by a group of people who know how to party. Full color shots of bands, booze, motorcycles, more bands, camping, custom vans, still more bands... There is a lot of fun being had in these pages. I dig what's going on here. —Ty Stranglehold (Ladyhump, LadyHump.org)

LAST NIGHT AT THE CASINO #14 & #15,

\$5, 4" x 5", copied, 38 pgs. and 46 pgs.

God damn I love this zine. Billy has put together a double issue and I devoured both in the course of an hour. I wish there was another issue for me to read. For those not familiar with *Last Night at the Casino*, Billy, a guy with a punk background, works as a dealer in a casino. He deals all sorts of games and has done it for over six years. He began his career in a Native American casino in New Mexico but these two issues find him with a job at a much larger operation in Baltimore, where he now resides. Billy brings us in from the start—his first day. He details his anxieties at this bigger casino and how he felt in over his head. But we follow along with him as he eases into place. He introduces us to his bosses, coworkers, and the regulars. In great detail he goes into the environment and the nuances of the characters. He takes us along and builds the tension to make us wonder if he'll ever have the opportunity to deal craps, which is his favorite game. For anyone who has ever wondered what it's like to work in a casino, check this out. Even if it's not your thing, the world of

gambling is such a weird alternate universe that *Last Night at the Casino* is worth your time. —Kurt Morris (iknowbilly@gmail.com)

MARYMARK PRESS GIVE-OUT SHEET SERIES 2018

(two issues), free, copied, 1 pg.

This poet, Mark Sonnenfeld, puts his (and the occasional contributor's) poetry on sheets of paper and gives them out to people. Besides his refusal to give me anything I can work with as an actual title, I can only applaud this. If ya send this guy a buck or some stamps, you could probably expect to get a few of these from this obstinate reviewer's nightmare (WE NEED CLEAR, OBVIOUS TITLES, MARK!), I mean, generous poet. —Craven Rock (Mark Sonnenfeld, 45-08 Old Millstone Dr., East Windsor, NJ 08520)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #432,

\$4.99, 8½" x 11", newsprint, 160 pgs.

It's the final print issue of *MRR*. I'll try to save my editorializing to a minimum, but I think it'd be lame not to mention the undeniable impact *MRR* has had on punk culture since its inception in 1982 (and as a radio show before that). As an older punk who navigated all this stuff pre-internet, *MRR* was an invaluable lifeline, and absolutely formative in my understanding of punk, politics, and DIY culture. Throughout the decades,

true crime is your bag, or if you loved *Monster*, or whatever, but it's about time that these people saw justice rather than fetishization. —jimmy cooper (outfromthevoid@yahoo.com)

PUNK IN A FOREIGN SPACE: TALES FROM WRITING THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN PUNK ROCK, 5½" x 8", 66 pgs.

I went into this expecting your typical tired prototypical scene history—yeah, we all sat around, got drunk, got into fights, whatever—and to some degree, received it. But *Punk in a Foreign Space*, for one, is about a scene that isn't well-known. I doubt most of the punks I know could name even one Russian punk band, and I couldn't either, and despite this, Herbert's story compelled me. You don't have to know the bands to know the story. Herbert does a fantastic job of translating these people, bands, and cities into the recognizable while maintaining what makes it distinctive. Perhaps it is his academic background, but I found myself compelled by some of his deeper claims about the nature and psychology of punk wherever you may be, and that's the real meat of this zine. Punk is only universal to a point, but where it is is what makes it worthwhile. When it becomes more, for Herbert, than "style and music," it begins to "embody possibilities, empowerment, and alternatives to the monotonous lives" we live. After reading *Punk in a Foreign Space*, I'm excited to see where Herbert's analysis of these possibilities lies: the book that this zine precedes comes

It'd be lame not to mention the undeniable impact *MRR* has had on punk culture since its inception in 1982. *MRR* was an invaluable lifeline and absolutely formative in my understanding of punk, politics, and DIY culture.

—Keith Rosson | MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #432

the zine could be riveting, and holier than thou, and compelling, and bighearted, and reactionary, and snobby, and well intentioned and moving. It was always informative, and always the sum of its parts; hundreds of people all tackling something together. Times change, and the print world has changed dramatically with it. Whether it's a big deal or not that *MRR* is done is up to you. I know I'll miss it, but I'm also profoundly grateful for the connections and knowledge it provided me as a young kid trying to figure stuff out. This final issue features interviews with Winston Smith(!), Apsurd, Provoke, Bush Tetras, the Toronto record store Faith/Void, and tons more. Plus photo spreads, international scene reports, columns, ads, and *allll* those reviews. It's fitting too that designer Martin Sprouse, the cover artist for *MRR* #1, does the cover for this final issue as well. See ya around, *MRR*, it's been real. —Keith Rosson (Maximum Rock'n'roll, PO Box 3852, SF, CA 94609)

OUT FROM THE VOID #2: A CHRONICLE OF EUGENE'S DEAD, MISSING, AND UNIDENTIFIED PEOPLE, 5½" x 8", 28 pgs.

Published originally in the *Eugene Weekly* newspaper, *Out from the Void* tells the untold stories of murdered and missing folks in Eugene, Ore. This issue focuses on murdered sex workers, in particular, Eryn Beth McClary, who disappeared in 1995 and whose case is cold. It also includes the essay *The Encyclopedia of the Missing* by Jeremy Lybarger, which is a profile of Meaghan Good, author of the Charley Project, a catalog of America's missing. If you like bingeing true crime shows, this might be the zine for you. I'd like to see more, though, than the same narrative repeated—she was a drug addict and a sex worker, so of course she got killed. Eryn McClary was a drug addict and a sex worker, but there is always more nuance to a story, and addicts and sex workers are demonized and victimized enough as is. It seems a little derivative to reduce these women to victims of their circumstance, now just names on a list in a zine. Lybarger alludes to this in his essay, describing "missing white woman syndrome," and it's true. Everyone loves a beautiful corpse. No shame if

out in September from Microcosm. Chapters of this zine are available as *Punks Around* #1 and *Punks Around* #5. —jimmy cooper (punksaround.bigcartel.com or punksaround@gmail.com)

PUNKS AROUND #6: ARMAGEDDON!, 5½" x 8", 36 pgs.

Punks Around is Herbert's ongoing series of zines by various authors cataloging obscure moments in scene history, his largely focusing on Russian punk, a few on North Dakota punk, and one on the role of the girls' room as a place of sanctuary in punk. This one is, as it says on the cover, "A full issue dedicated to Rhode Island and Boston's favorite punk and metal record shop (at least ours)." This zine is steeped in the kind of nostalgia that makes me want to tell the folks writing to either 1) make the feeling they're longing for happen, or 2) let the kids have a little fun. Sometimes scene history is like this—a mourning for bygone days without respect for the contemporary. Of course punk changes, and scenes change, people and places come and go, but at the heart is the attitude and will that places like the Armageddon record store that is the focus of this zine exemplify, and that's not gone, it's just shifted. The kids are just fine, and punk is too. That being said, the highlight of this zine is the interview with the founder of Armageddon. That kind of dedication and work never goes out of style. —jimmy cooper (punksaround.bigcartel.com or punksaround@gmail.com)

RAZORBLADES & ASPIRIN #5, \$2, 5 ¾" x 8 ½", Laserjet, 44 pgs.

This is one beautiful punk and hardcore photozine: the photos themselves, the colors, the layout. It all jumps off the page. As far as writing goes, there is a brief introduction and a couple of pages of record reviews; other than that are all-out gig photos. I really enjoyed this. —Ty Stranglehold (Razorblades & Aspirin, PO Box 23173, Richmond, VA 23223)

SLEEPWALKING (2019 reissue) \$5, 5½" x 8½", full-color copied, 32 pgs. A comic about a bunch of punk kids hanging out in the park who decide to go to a house show. Some are dealing with alcoholism, some with



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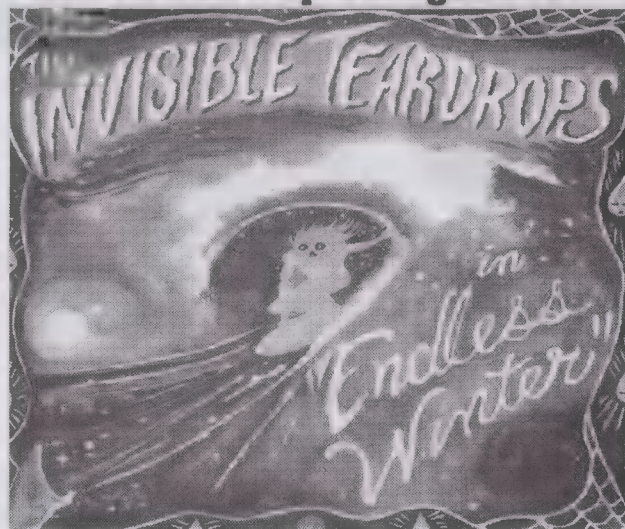
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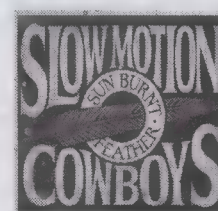
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breakups, and some with boredom. It's just a day-in-the-life of these punk types. Oh, they are also portrayed as very realistic anthropomorphic woodland creatures. Clementine the possum, Mary the rat, Douglas the squirrel, et cetera. It's a very "mumblecore" story. No huge plot or arc. Just a bunch of animals foraging from point A to point B. However, the artwork is awe-inspiring with hand-painted everything. The water colored backgrounds are especially good. You don't see a lot of this handiwork in current comics. That cover is damn impressive too. —Rick V. (Lauren Monger, silversprocket.net)

SLINGSHOT #129, free, 11" x 18", newsprint, 15 pgs.
Quarterly independent radical newspaper *Slingshot* is back with their summer issue. A really great essay includes a cover story on "sterilization in the face of climate change," a think piece of one individual's choice to get tubal ligation as a form of responsibility to not procreate in our

WACKY WESTERN DOUBLE DIGEST,

\$6, 5" x 7½", 2-color copied, 24 pgs.
A wild'n'weird split comic about two different tiny cowboys. One side features Faecke's *Boy Howdy: Wonder Kid of the West and his Wonder Horse Fasty*. It's a light-hearted and dumb romp about young Boy Howdy being a great boy sheriff until he is framed for poisoning the well by the boy gov'nor. It's drawn like 1950's pulp comics, goofy as all get out and right pretty to look at. The flipside is Pratt's *Dog Walker & Boy the Dog in... Rough Ridin' 'Round Bunghole Bend!* Dog Walker is an unlucky little cowboy lad who rides his dog across the desert. When he attempts to get a drink from the saloon he is shot at, punched, swindled, and branded. You could probably figure it out by the title; it's got that potty humor that your Sunday school teacher won't approve of. It's a nice little double comic to leave out in the break room for your coworkers to say "What the fuck?" at. —Rick V. (Pete Faecke and A.T. Pratt, thestinkhole.storenvy.com)

Slingshot never falls short on eye-opening and thought provoking essays. It continues to be an essential free educational and radical newsprint.

—Tricia Ramos | SLINGSHOT #129

current climate and instead focus on activism and bettering the world we live in. I also really enjoyed the other cover story on phone addiction in society and how it affects our brain chemistry and is essentially making us idiots in this internet age. *Slingshot* never falls short on eye-opening and thought provoking essays. It continues to be an essential free educational and radical newsprint. —Tricia Ramos (Slingshot, PO Box 3051, Berkeley, CA 94703)

SOME PEOPLE CAN'T DIE, free, 5½" x 8½", copied, 44 pgs.
Not actually a zine, this is a standalone short story—10,000 words worth I am told—in standard zine format, concerning the ever-merry themes of addiction, suicide, redemption, more addiction, fraud, despair, and additional addiction. It's a fun and easy way to experience drug addiction and failed suicide attempts without ever having to leave the comfort of your stone sober living room recliner! It's the best of both worlds, I tell you! I was able to read this in exactly the time of my lunch break at work, and I thought it was a pretty decent break room read. My favorite sentence is "The dude that carried the words from his brain to his mouth was wearing moon boots and the person who met him there was rapidly descending into a pit of quicksand." —Rev. Nørb (Sean Thomas Dunne, 1020 NW 9th Ave. #1112, Portland OR 97209, tinyurl.com/SeanDunneWritingFolder)

SPIDDER #20, \$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 30 pgs.
The band The Pine Hill Haints have toured Ireland many times, and over the course of time have collected ghost stories, haunting tales, and legends. In this issue of *Spidder*, we're introduced to them. "The Legend of the Hellfire Club" is one such ghost story that is known by so many Irish that there are slightly different versions included in this zine. Short stories of card games with men who have hooved feet, eerie meetings in lighthouses, and a cave of cats to name a few. Also included is a separate mini-zine in full color (featuring the story of the cave of cats). Perfect mix of spooky legends and illustrations of cat people to set the mood. —Tricia Ramos (Spidder, 1207 N. Wood Ave., Florence, AL 35630, thewednesday@hotmail.com)

SUPER COOL AND STUFF #8, \$3, 5½" x 8½", black and white, copied, 24 pgs.
A comic zine about Ricky's obsession with wrestling. It's mostly comprised of one-page comics about body slamming his sister or skipping out on dances to watch ECW. There is a longer narrative in the middle about his wrestling action figures that tie into Ricky's love for his grandmother. It's really very touching. Ricky draws his characters big and prominent with wild facial expressions. And some of those strips are laugh out loud funny. It's a quick and fun read. Even if you don't care about wrestling. —Rick V. (Ricky Vigil, rickyvigil.com)

(WE'VE ALL GOT) BAGGAGE: ENVISIONING AN IDEAL COMMUNITY AND ENGAGING IT WITH OUR OWN PROBLEMS AND HANGUPS: \$7.95, 4¼" x 7", copied, 88pgs.

The intro states this zine is a celebration of Microcosm Publishing's anniversary, "dedicated to showing that working through baggage and creating the ideal community is what we are all in this for." There's some real honest work being done herein: one essayist discusses a painful coming to terms with past behaviors he's been called out on; another works through gender dysphoria and abuse. A chorus of voices in other essays affirm that yes, Microcosm is a great place to work and a fantastic group of individuals working towards a common goal. It's odd, then, that the longest essay in here, by Microcosm head Joe Biel, is about how he has "outgrown his former scene." Biel has been accused of abusive behavior by his former business partner/wife, a quick internet search reveals. He counters here by responding that his abuse was due to undiagnosed autism. Biel says all the right things about his subsequent self-work and being sorry—but the dictionary, he says, defines abuse as "callously indifferent." Abuse doesn't apply to his situation because his disability made it hard for him to empathize. Putting these conditions on his apology adds an undermining defensiveness to the proceedings. And it's odd his essay reminds readers that he checked out of the scene when the zine's stated intent is creating community by working through baggage. This garbled message draws attention away from the honest processing and emotional labor of some writers herein. —Michael T. Fournier (Microcosm, 2752N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227)

YOUR NEURODIVERSE FRIEND: BEING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF, 4¼" x 7", offset, 61 pgs.

Neurodiverse and autistic people think and act differently than other people. They also struggle to understand and be understood in a neurotypical world. Their behavior is often confusing and odd to neurotypical people. They have trouble reading situations and are often taken advantage of. This zine is made up of neurodiverse contributors writing about being in situations where neurotypical people have manipulated and taken advantage of them. The title suggests that it should be read by friends (and family) of the neurodiverse to get a better understanding of what they go through and how they think, so this is a zine that everyone should read. So you should do that. You won't regret it, either. I found myself completely engulfed in some of the stories. —Craven Rock (Microcosm Press, microcosmpublishing)



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Dead Extra

By Sean Carswell, 253 pgs.

For most of my life, I didn't realize I enjoyed detective novels. It should've made sense that I would enjoy them: noir is my favorite film genre. In reviewing Nelson George's *To Funk and Die in LA* last year for *Razorcake*, I came to realize how much I enjoy the genre. I especially like books set in the 1940s, which is the beginning of the noir genre in film. Those set around L.A. are even better.

John Waters's stories about chaos are told with a guru level of calm.

Mr. Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder

By John Waters, 384 pgs.

Mr. Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder is a memoir by John Waters, a filmmaker whose initial low-budget films centered on the lives of despicable but somewhat likable characters. His movies are notorious for exhibiting lewd conduct and illuminating bad behavior, if not downright cataloging it at times. Waters parlayed his unique point of view on life, fame, and the unusual nature of Baltimore natives into a Hollywood career; his biggest hit being 1988's *Hairspray*, a comedy examining racial inequality on a regional Baltimore television show in 1962. The film was turned into a hit musical winning several Tony awards and is performed around the world.

Beginning with the filming of *Polyester*, Waters picks up where his first memoir, *Shock Value* (1981), left off. In *Shock Value*, the stories of decadence and chaos on the set of his independent films are described in detail with Waters's uncanny ability to judge people's character without using a standard moral compass. *Know-It-All* picks up in the years of Waters's varying degrees of climbing the success ladder and traversing the more surreal landscape of Hollywood filmmaking and moderate fame. Some things never change as he lovingly recounts stories of his past glories and failures, graciously including love and praise to his greatest allies in the business while simultaneously giving hints to potential filmmakers as to what to expect along the road to potentially making a movie.

Now, as the author of several books, Waters has surpassed his legacy as a filmmaker in recent years. His previous books *Role Models* (2010) and *Carsick* (2014) both made The New York Times Best Seller list. Waters is a gem as a storyteller and comes across in his writing as one of the most affable people you could hear tell about show business. The road to *Hairspray* becoming a musical is filled with amusing anecdotes, but Waters's writing is as congenial when recounting smaller and less successful events. There's always a story and the large appeal in Waters's writing is his ability to consistently appear to be having a good time. His stories about chaos are told with a guru level of calm. His life is very

—Billups Allen | *Mr. Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder*

Thus, I found *Razorcake* co-founder and columnist Sean Carswell's latest novel to be a perfect fit, as it checked all the boxes. A detective story, set in the 1940s in and around Los Angeles? I couldn't have been happier.

The chapters go back and forth between the male lead, Jack Chesley, and his wife, Wilma. Jack comes back from World War II in 1946 after being in a POW camp in Germany to find that Wilma died a few years earlier. Wilma's chapters take place in 1943 and expose the reader to the reasons for her demise. This back and forth not only gives one a path to follow along with the story, but also gives agency to a female character and allows her to explain her life instead of having it done through a male character's lens. I appreciated that point of view because it gives the reader an opportunity to see things from a perspective that is atypical for detective books, which is normally male character dominated.

Detective stories are a new genre for Carswell, but one that he pulls off well. His prose is tight, as is the dialogue. While some of the typical language of many detective films and books from the '40s was used ("dame," "lugs" as another name for hired muscle, "kitten" as a name for a cute woman), it wasn't heavy-handed.

Carswell's talent for this genre is surprising and impressive. His ability to create an environment that is authentic immersed me in the tale. I had an understanding of the locations and a feel for what was surrounding the characters. The pace is quick and this is literally one of those times I can genuinely say I didn't want to put a book down. Great stuff and highly recommended. —Kurt Morris (Prospect Park Books, 2359 Lincoln Ave., Altadena, CA 91001)

different from the rest of us, but he never lets you forget he takes a great interest in the world around him, particularly when that world takes place in Baltimore. —Billups Allen (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux)

Revenge of the She-Punks:

A Feminist Music History from Poly Styrene to Pussy Riot

By Vivien Goldman, 193 pgs.

Vivien Goldman has put together the perfect book for the streaming generation. Using identity, money, love, and protest as chapter headings, Goldman makes interesting and sophisticated connections as she discusses dozens of woman-fronted punk acts. Some of these, like Crass and Patti Smith and the Raincoats, will be familiar to *Razorcake* readers. The newer ones—like Pragaash and Big Joanie and Skinny Girl Diet—might not be as familiar, but are no less vital.

Goldman has been around since punk's inception, and effectively merges her own experiences with interviews and research throughout. I think her intention here was to tantalize: as I read, the aforementioned stories—and especially the connecting thread of framework—made me dive back into bands I already knew, and dig to find out more about those I didn't. Goldman puts the ball in the reader's court to tremendous effect throughout. Awesome! —Michael T. Fournier (University of Texas Press, utexaspress.com)

Sketchtasy

By Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, 268 pgs.

In homage to David Wojnarowicz, Sycamore ripped my heart out and put it back together again (this book is dedicated, in part, to Wojnarowicz, and features his work as a cornerstone of queer grief and desire, and emulates him quite well). *Sketchtasy* is a whirlwind of tulle and coke and



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fucking. *Sketchtasy* is not light reading. *Sketchtasy*, may not, in fact, be the book for you. It does not cut corners, and does not hesitate to throw sucker punches or take a romp through the gutter. It's a filthy story about queer struggle and resilience rife with run-ons—it does not stop to take a breath.

Sycamore is best known for her work editing collections such as *Why Are Faggots So Afraid of Faggots*, questioning toxic masculinity and respectability within the queer community, and though this is fiction, it follows similar lines of questioning. What kind of queers are “respectable?” What kind of queers will always be on the margins? This question is answered in Alexa's days and nights spent turning tricks in altered wedding gowns, stealing sleeping bags to give to the homeless, covering the walls in art about healing.

Glamour, here, is celebrating survival in a world that wants you dead, glitter on your nails, twirling together on the dance floor.

—jimmy cooper | *Sketchtasy*

Major, major trigger warnings for this book regarding addiction, incest, and rape, but major props for dealing with them without turning it into either trauma porn or think-positive-thoughts bullshit, which none of us, at this point, need. There's plenty of that in this world. Alexa suffers deeply; the people around her suffer deeply. They cope with drugs and booze, they fall on and off the wagon but they also love, and feel joy, and sometimes that joy is all your friends doing ecstasy in your sugar daddy's jacuzzi, and sometimes that joy is the perfect song or perfect shade of lipstick for the moment. Much of this story is about seeking glamour, but not the runway, not riches, not fucking Ru Paul. Glamour, here, is celebrating survival in a world that wants you dead, glitter on your nails, twirling together on the dance floor.

As if there's not enough going on, this is also an AIDS novel, starting with the disillusionment of late-'90s AIDS activism, recognizing the collective grief that's never really gone away, not even now, and coming back around to the stories that were told, particularly, again, in Wojnarowicz. This is the kind of dauntless fiction we need. I'm tired of queer history being glossed over and made picture-perfect, an endless celebration. It wasn't, and isn't. The first Pride was a riot. We still need to throw bricks through the windows of cop cars, and we still need our stories and struggles told for what they were and are. Sycamore, I hope, is only part of the beginning of this. —jimmy cooper (Arsenal Pulp Press, arsenalpulp.com)

Trips: Rock Life in the Sixties, Augmented Edition
By Ellen Sander, 296 pgs.

Ellen Sander was one of the first wave of American rock critics, during a time when “the rock n roll press... consisted of anyone who was low enough on the staff totem pole to be sent out to cover a rock group. A handful of determined freelancers challenged all that, puddle jumping publications until the savvier periodicals took notice.” Her work appeared in *Vogue* and *Hit Parade*, and her essay about Led Zeppelin was anthologized. Despite all this, I only knew her through her poetry: my broadsheet journal *Cabildo Quarterly* published some of her stuff a few years back. She mentioned via social media that a collection of her rock essays was to be re-released by Dover Publications.

The augmented edition of Sander's *Trips: Rock Life in the Sixties* is a revelation. Through her essays, interviews, and reviews, she casts a critical light on the decade through its musical and cultural progression, starting with immersion in the early 1960s folks scene, moving through Monterey Pop and Woodstock, to the calamitous signpost that was Altamont.

Often, essay collections like this lack cohesion. They don't always need a throughline, if the writing is good enough to keep readers engaged. Sander's writing is consistently excellent throughout: she's able to shift from discussions of the general feelings of her generation to the specifics of gigs and songs without a hitch. In addition to this, she befriends and follows several different musicians, which adds a kind of story arc to her narrative. Roger McGuinn of the Byrds (endearingly referred

to throughout as Jim) and David Crosby pop up throughout *Trips* in different permutations of their careers. But beyond this, the decade is the throughline: folk and hippie scenes are discussed both in terms of music and lifestyle before rock establishes itself as a cultural phenomenon—and, sadly, after rock becomes a lens through which the most regressive, sexist behaviors filter. Sander's essay on Led Zeppelin's tour, during which band members assault Sander, is harrowing and absolutely crucial.

I held my nose and watched the Epix four-part punk rock documentary a few months back and was pleasantly surprised to find it wasn't entirely horrible. Sure, the punk origin narrative is fairly hidebound at this point, but as more time passes, voices beyond all the standard white dudes are being not only heard but integrated into the canon. It's encouraging. I mention the doc in this book review because

our perception of history is constantly being reexamined. It was great to see Jayne County and Palmolive and Kathleen Hanna in the discussion, as they should be. When we reconsider the history of rock music as a whole and consider where punk music and culture fits into it, we need a polyphony of voices. Ellen Sander is such a voice. —Michael T. Fournier (Dover, doverpublications.com)

Why Karen Carpenter Matters

By Karen Tongson, 138 pgs.

Karen Carpenter was one half of the brother-and-sister '70s soft-rock duo the Carpenters. Their best-known song is probably “Top of the World.” Carpenter herself is probably best-known for starving herself to death. Musicians with songs about her include Young Fresh Fellows, Sonic Youth, and Dave Alvin.

According to author Karen Tongson, the Carpenters are more than just “popular” in the Philippines:

Karen Carpenter matters to Filipinos and Filipino Americans like me, whose movements through the megalopolis of Manila, to and from the Philippines' rural provinces, and eventually to distant places for overseas labor, are scored to Karen's voice: one redolent of tears, even when she sings about unbridled joy.

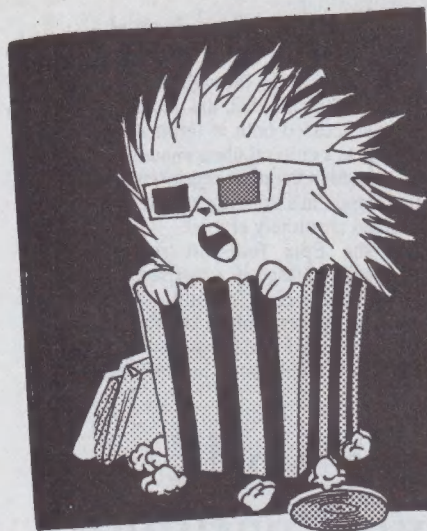
Why Karen Carpenter Matters weaves Carpenter's life as an American musician (and, for a time, superstar) with Tongson's life as the child of Filipino musicians. It also features music criticism and cultural criticism.

Tongson is an excellent biographer and an eye-opening music critic, though while I understand why *she* connected strongly with the Carpenters' music, I came away unconvinced that she explained the Philippines' connection to it. As an example of her task, she addresses journalists' attempts to explain why so many Latinos love Morrissey, which love can probably be explained by Morrissey's sounding like the *cantantes* his Latino fans grew up hearing (consider that the next time you hear “There Is a Light That Never Goes Out”)—maybe Carpenter's voice triggered a similar kind of memory?

In the chapter titled “Queer Horizon,” the word “Queer” refers to gender. Tongson explores the weird contemporaneous perception of Carpenter as a “tomboy”—no one I know would call her that—and it's in this chapter that Tongson most closely examines Carpenter's anorexia and death.

Why Karen Carpenter Matters is a short book, part of the University of Texas Press' Music Matters series (reminiscent of the 33 1/3 series in which each book is devoted to a single album). —Jim Woster (University of Texas Press, UTexasPress.org)





VIDEO review

Lee Ving is terrified of asbestos.

Dudes: Blu-ray / DVD

Penelope Spheeris movies have a long history of having hard-to-get releases. There was a time where every punk house had their coveted bootleg VHS tape of *Decline of the Western Civilization*. When the *Decline* trilogy was released on DVD in 2015, the world rejoiced.

The same thing happened with Spheeris's 1987 punk western *Dudes*. The movie had a very limited release in theaters and an equally-as-small release on VHS. There was a time where the only way to get a copy of *Dudes* was by ordering a bootleg VHS through the Kung Fu Records catalog.

Dudes starts off at a Vandals show, where we see the protagonists being thrown around in the pit to "Urban Struggle." They are Milo (Flea), who wears coffee mugs on his leather jacket. Mohawk-sporting Biscuit (Daniel Roebuck). And the punk everyman, Grant (Jon Cryer). After a near-death experience, the trio decides it's time to leave the big city and move to California.

On the way to California, the trio is bombarded by a gang of toughs led by Missoula (Lee Ving), who rob them and kill Milo. From this point on, the movie is no longer the fun punk road trip movie you may have expected. Biscuit and Grant go on a manhunt to find the gang and get revenge. But being city boys, they aren't good at it. Not until they run into Jesse (Catherine Mary Stewart), who teaches them how to shoot and survive. Suddenly, Grant is dressed like a desperado with a bullet belt and fingerless gloves. And after having a Native American battle dream, Biscuit starts dressing and acting like a bad Native American stereotype.

That aspect of the movie is truly cringe-worthy. Especially when they have spiritual hallucinations after they drink some special firewater given to them by an Elvis impersonator.

Despite those scenes, the movie is enjoyable. And when it's bad, it's enjoyably bad. The jokes are corny and the action is whatever. However, you do get the urge to re-watch it after it's over to revisit the dramatic changes the characters go through. It starts with New York punks kicking pavement to two cowboys shooting at members of Fear in the desert.

This release is the first time the movie has been available on disc format. And it does look much nicer than that copy of a copy, of a copy, of a copy, that made its rounds years prior. The special features include Penelope Spheeris interviewing the main cast. There are some pretty good anecdotes about Biscuit's mohawk, Jon Cryer being thrown into the pit, and Flea being discovered by Spheeris eating lasagna at Lee Ving's house. You also learn that Lee Ving is terrified of asbestos.

It's very cool that Penelope Spheeris's pre-Wayne's World movies are finally getting their time in the sun. Now Shout Factory, if you're reading this, it's time to re-release *Hollywood Vice Squad*. —Rick V. (shoutfactory.com)



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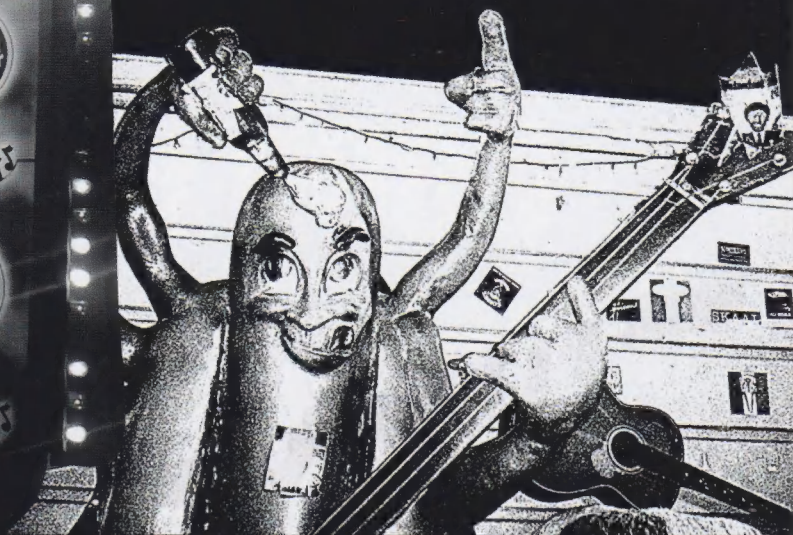


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Cafe NELA



In September 2013 we opened Cafe NELA to give a place for the punk rock community to have a home after losing Mr T's Bowl, Al's Bar, and Rajis. Since then we have brought bands from all over the world to Cypress Park. From Canada, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Ireland, UK, Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands, and Denmark bands came to Cypress Park. We tried to create a nucleus for the punk scene in Northeast Los Angeles and Los Angeles where bands would have a home base and a community could exist. A place where bands from the Masque, The Cathay De Grande, The Palomino, and the Ash Grove still had a home. A refuge of Surf and Metal and Outlaw Country.

Cafe NELA will be closing in September 2019. We tried to keep it going as long as possible, but our situation is not sustainable, so we must cease to exist at this location. We will have three months of farewell shows with a lot of great bands. Check out Website www.CafeNELA.net for who is playing and when.

Thank You to everybody who worked here to make all happen

Dirty Ed Fantl, Nubs Gutmacher, Hope Urban, Kat Ugalde, Alex Alvarez, Israel Villar, Poncho Alba, Gerry Shaia, Josh Berry, Timbo de la Garza, Jamie Cassius, Mario Lalli, Illiana Lalli, Ron Peterkin, Dave Drive, Kidd Spike, John Ramirez, Rosemary Reyes, Mike Villalobos, Cindy Forline, Cheryl Von Winckelmann, Eric Yanez, Ed Rarer, Axxel G Reese, Pat 'Frenchie' French, Bill Bateman, Charles Sarceda, Mark Encinas.

Thank you to all who played:

Danza Azteca XipeTotec, Don Preston, Willie Chambers, Davie Allan and the Arrows, The Grandmothers of Invention, Peter Lewis, Simon Stokes, The Ike Willis Project, The Dogs, Gene Taylor, The Alley Cats, The Last, The Controllers, The Gears, The Skulls, Alice Bag, The Deadbeats, Carlos Guitarlos, The Blasters, Legal Weapon, Redd Kross, Saccharine Trust, The Mocolodiaes, Jack Brewer Band, Lawndale, Fatso Jetson, Yawning Man, Midget Handjob, Blood on the Saddle, The Human Hands, The Urinals, 100 Flowers, Radwaste, The Atomic Sherpas, Carnage Asada, Spain, The Haden Triplets, Bratty And Jackass, Sumo Princess, DJ Bonebrake, Dez Cadena, Mike Watt, Chuck Dukowski, Joe Baiza, Sylvia Juncosa, SA Griffin, Taquila Mockingbird, Mike Livingstone, The Cheifs, Circle One, Decry, Public Nuisance, Mad Parade, RF7, Killroy, The Grim, Angry Samoan Later Years, The Crowd, Rikk Agnew Band, The Radolescents, The Horseheads, Symbol Six, Luicidal, Beowulf, Cycotic Youth, Junkyard, Hollywood Hate, Haunted Garage, Duchess De Sade Band, Rosemary's Billygoat, Pat Todd and the Rankoutsiders, PopDefect, Backbiter, Third Grade Teacher, The Humpers, The Mormons, Betty Blowtorch, WACO, Carla Bozulich, The Neptunas, Moist and Meaty, Live Nude, The Guilty Hearts, Iconoclast, Ollin, Aztlan Underground, Los Creepers, Underground Alliance, Countime, The Insect Surfers, The Black Widows, Double Naught Spycar, Mushroom, Cello Pudding, Bastard Son, Warwitch, Early Priest, The Hickoids, Grant Hart, Mr Airplane Man, Reverend Beat-Man, Somos Misteriosos, The Golden Rulers, The Probe, The Amadans, Master Cylinder, Charmkin Rebellion, Biblical Proof of UFOs, Hellbat, Swords of Fatima, Inazuma, The Rocketz, Mars, The Bloody Brains, The Zoomies, The Scotch Apostles, Rosemary Reyes Band, Non-Blips, Louis Metoyer Group, I See Hawks in L.A., A Pretty Mess, Dee Skusting and the Rodents, NonCon, I Madman, Skulls and Bones, Neverland Ranch Davidians, Exploding Pintos, Beggars and Choosers, Sweet and Cruel, Pedal Strike, OT y Los Condors, Akrid, Enemy Proof, Baron Bandini, Loss For Concern, Elkhead, Revolting Sounds, Forced Identity, Reckless, The Goons, Haze Dreams, The Skunk Munks, The Rails, Generacion Suicida, The Tissues, Shag Rats, Onda No, Go Betty Go, Chicano Batman, Very Be Careful, La Tumba, Earth Arrow, Moonlight Trio, Social Conflict, Gitane Demone Quartet, Egrets on Ergot, Man-Wray, Naked Agression, The Shocker, Radioactive Chicken Heads, Mac Sabbath, Raw Power Rangers, Death On The Radio, Sunny War, Tenement Rats, Rough Kids, Rough Church, Chavez Ravine, Dirty Eyes, Cheap Tissue, Crazy Squeeze, Way to Go Genius, Turbulent Hearts, Landfill, Brainspoon, Magnet Hearts, The Terpenes, Sssssss, Poisonous Members, Sun and Sail Club, Year of the Dragon, Trulio Disgracias, Peligro, Dante HH, One Square Mile, The Electric Ferrets, Kat Arthur and the Hellcats, Reincarnate, Sacred Origin, Nausea, Abactive Ramex, Marriage Material, Lethal Dosage, Terrodactyl, Spindrift, Twisted Black Sole, Herbert, The Hellions, My Revenge, The Schizophonics, DFMK, Johnny Otis Davila, Obnox, The Ring-leaders, Whipstriker, Crying Nut, Gutara Kyo, Otonana Trio, Birdstriking, Chui Wan, Raul, Jimmy and The Weeds, Santa Sabbath, The Torchbearers, and all the other bands who have played.

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